Companions For A Quiet Hour

AN INFALLIBLE WAY TO CONTENTMENT

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COMPANIONS FOR A QUIET HOUR.

III.

An Infallible Way to Contentment.

Companions for a Quiet Hour.

AN INFALLIBLE

WAY TO CONTENTMENT

IN THE MIDST OF

PUBLIC AND PERSONAL CALAMITIES.

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"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."

Acts xx. 24.

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LONG have I viewed, long have I thought,
And held with trembling hand this bitter draught
'T was now, just to my lips applied,
Nature shrunk back, and all my courage died;
But now resolved and firm I'll be,
Since, Lord, 'tis mingled and reached out by Thee.

Since 'tis Thy sentence I should part
With the most precious treasure of my heart,
I freely that, and more resign:
My heart itself, as its delight is Thine,
My little all I give to Thee,
Thou gavest a greater gift——Thy Son to me.

He left true bliss and joys above,
Himself He emptied of all good but love:
For me He freely did forsake,
More good than He from me can take:
"A mortal life for a divine,
He took, and did at last even that resign."

Take all, my God, I will not grieve,
But still will wish that I had more to give:
I hear Thy voice, Thou bidst me quit
My Paradise——I bless and do submit.
I will not murmur at Thy word,
Nor beg thine angel to sheathe up his sword.

MONSALL, A.D. 1600. (?)

AN

INFALLIBLE WAY TO CONTENTMENT.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

How great an impostor is this world unto us! In the diversity of reports and opinions, in the eager pursuit of worldly greatness, in the hungry thirst after carnal pleasures, in the heat of passion, in the cries of the poor, in the oppression of the rich, in the throng of business, in the remission of idleness, in the diversion of friends, in the spite of enemies, in the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows of this evil world, how few find rest and content—how many lose God and themselves! When I consider the usefulness and excellency of Divine Contentment; how necessary and profitable, pleasant and comfortable, beautiful and amiable; how it makes us rich and happy, in despite of the world; fits us to do and receive good, and

to suffer evil; how it frees us from sin, and innumerable temptations to it; how creditable to religion; how pleasing, how like, how near it is unto God; as, also, the great trouble and burden, vanity and unreasonableness, hurt and unprofitableness, pride and unthankfulness, rebellion and unbelief, the sinfulness, mischief, and sad effects of murmuring, impatience, and discontent; how much below the spirit, profession, and duty, relation, dignity, and expectation of Christians; what God hath had from some, and expects from all; how dishonourable, displeasing, and provoking it is to Him; how it impoverishes and beggars us; renders us incapable of enjoying any mercy; excludes us from all true joy, comfort, rest, or safety; exposes us to all imaginable mischiefs and miseries:—I am ashamed of my folly; I am confounded at, I crave pardon for my guilt; I am concerned, I resolve to be otherwise.

Such considerations occasioned the collection of those ensuing; and were they familiarized, made part of ourselves, enter-

tained with a firm unshaken belief of their truth and use, we should not be at a loss where to run for relief in our distress, but be able (by altering and tempering the dispositions and inclinations of our minds, wills, and affections, under divine grace, for "we can do all things through Christ strengthening us," Phil. iv. 13, to be happy in those circumstances, which render others miserable; to frustrate and escape the effects of the most common causes of grief and misery, making them the causes of pleasure and delight; those occurrences and accidents, occasions of the greatest joy, which embitter the pleasures of other men.

This world is a state of probation; we live in it on no other terms than to be liable to all the hazards and adventures, troubles, changes and vicissitudes that attend mortality. Vanity and vexation are the essence of all earthly things, incorporated into the mass of this visible creation. "In the world you shall have tribulation," John xvi. 33; the ordinary lot and portion of all those, the

Captain of whose salvation was "made perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. To be offended at them, is to be offended that we are men or Christians. It becomes us not to pore upon our present evils, but attentively to look about us, and consider what others have cheerfully endured, and to upbraid ourselves with such like questions, What then, are we better than they? Art thou greater than Abraham and the prophets? Whom makest thou thyself? If you be "without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons," Heb. xii. 8. It is the character and brand of the wicked, that "they are not in trouble as other men," Psalm lxxiii. 5. Every true Israelite expects his father Jacob's legacy. "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him," Gen. xlix. 23. And to find his days, like Jacob's, not only *few*, but *evil*. Gen. xlvii. 9. Heaven's highest favourites have no writ of privilege, but the unspeakable advantage of making them easy and useful by considerate, submissive, contented minds.

Patience lessens pain and suffering: trouble aggravates every sad accident: contentment makes it none at all. If we will, it cannot harm us; if we give way to it, we wound ourselves, and join with it to make us miserable, and a single mischief a great many: but if we quietly sit still, and "in patience possess our souls," we are what we were before the evil came, only our souls have the addition of the greatest joy and pleasure, by the victory we have obtained over it and ourselves. The greatest of our misfortunes is our impatience. Discontent is worse than any evil we feel: contentment is better than any comfort we want or desire.

How pleasant is it to a Christian to find himself willing to be without that which he most desired; and to suffer that to which he was most averse, far sweeter than the obtaining and enjoying of that he longed for. It is better to be content through grace, than through the enjoying any outward comfort; that can content me but in one particular, but this grace in all: this makes my soul

better; the thing I would have, cannot. In having my desire satisfied, I am content through self-love; but by this grace I come to be content out of submission and love to God, a shelter and sanctuary within us against all injuries abroad; who fills the faithful soul with His peace and presence: in Him we find refuge in our dangers, confidence in our fears, comfort in our sorrows, counsel in our perplexities, light in our darkness, and life in death. Could we but as well rejoice in our present happiness, as He hath made provision for it, we could no more miss of it than of that which is without end.

CHAPTER II.

Encouragement from the Faithfulness and Omnipresence of God.

GOD doth not set us to plough the rock, to feed in a dry and barren wilderness. He hath provided both for our safety and

peace and well-being; the covenant, as well as the land of promise, flows with milk and honey. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have:" for He hath said, (Deut. xxxi. 8; Josh. i. 5) "I will never," in no case, at no time, upon no occasion, for no cause, in no condition, respect, or relation, by no means "leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. He may change His dispensations, but not His affections, relations, engagements; chastise, but not disown, not disinherit; may cast down, but not cast off; withdraw for a time, but not depart for good and all: No, "I will not turn away from them to do them good," Jer. xxxii. 40. "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 33. He loves us too dear indeed, hath paid too dear for us, to leave us in our defilements, without grace; in our disquietness and dejections, without comfort; in our dangers and difficulties, without protection; in our graves, without preservation

and deliverance. He will not leave us in life; not leave us at death; not leave us after death; not leave us when our breath hath left us. He will be a faster friend than our very souls are to us. Gen. xlvi. 3, 4, and l. 13. He is with us and our's, when friends or we are absent; enemies, evils round about us; who is most nearly related to us, who most dearly loves us, who will never be wanting to us in any thing that is good for us. In His company there can be no danger: "If God be for us, who, what can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. None but such as must be against Himself, nothing but weakness, nothing to hurt us; there is no room for doubting, whether it shall go well with us.

Estrangement from God, and distrust in Him, are the causes of all disquietness in ourselves. When we run away from Him, we fly from our shield, our shadow, our rock, our refuge, and lose our confidence in His protection. "Put on (saith the apostle) the armour of light," Rom. xiii. 12. Strange

armour, that a man may see through it! A good man's armour is, that he needs none; his armour is an open breast; that he can expose himself, fearless of any injury. "Who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?" 1 Pet. iii. 13. He is secure from all external violence, so far as it shall be never able to invade his spirit, which is raised above this stormy region, where clouds and tempests have no place. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17. True peace is the necessary consequence of holiness, but dwells not where sin is not pardoned and subdued, and an uninterrupted course of piety maintained. "The Lord will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints," Psa. lxxxv. 8; but "no peace unto the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22. He who lives carelessly, cannot be peaceable. There is no protection against fear but innocency. "A good man is satisfied from himself," Prov. xiv. 14. "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there" is hap-

piness, "for the kingdom of God is within you," Luke xvii. 21. Labour after truth, and peace will follow. By not doing our own works, we keep the true rest and sabbath of the soul. "To him that overcomes (himself) is given the hidden manna," Rev. ii. 17. He can have no peace that lodges his deadly enemy in his bosom. He only can have the Holy Spirit for his Comforter, that hath Him for his Guide.

When religion is become our temper and constitution, and the Divine will our joy and pleasure, our full content, our just satisfaction; in taking Christ's yoke upon us, by a pliable submissive frame and temper of spirit, a free, sincere, entire obedience to His laws, learning of Him to be meek and lowly of heart, "we shall find rest unto our souls," Matt. xi. 20. O the never-ceasing music, comfort, and satisfaction of a good conscience! It is our suffering, sick-bed, death-bed cordial; a softer pillow under our head, though that be upon a stone, and we have no covering but the canopy of heaven

over us, than others can lay theirs upon, in the richest pavilions, or most splendid palaces; it causes the patient to smile, while the spectators weep; the martyr to bleed with more ease than the executioner sweats; it is a continual feast, when we have nothing else: enables us to eat herbs, and drink water, and give God thanks.

Guilt is always terrifying and affrighting: makes great ones tremble in the midst of their palaces; afraid of death under covert of their gilded ceilings. The cleft of a wall puts them into a fright; the clattering of a shutter drives their courage to a nonplus; they fear their days to be at an end every time the wind breaks a pane in their window, or puffs up a tile from their roof: places of safety are not secure to them; and they are as much amazed to see the tapestry slip from the wall, as if an earthquake had violently thrown up the foundation of their dwelling. An evil spirit, their guilty conscience, haunts them continually, which all their diversions cannot conjure down or drive away; so that,

though neither God nor man punish them in this world, they can never pardon nor enjoy themselves. Guilt makes them think they still hear the noise and alarm of wrath and vengeance.

> At every flash of lightning they wax pale;
> When distant thunder rumbles, villains quail.

Guilt and unbelief create all our fears; make us weary of the day, and watchful in the night; our sleep short, the night long; our dreams troublesome, our watchings painful; a pale face, a thoughtful, desponding, perplexed heart; shut up heaven itself against us; make the God of Truth a liar. Faith opens heaven, glorifies God, fortifies, confirms the heart, and establishes us; fills us with courage and acquiescence in Him; holds our heart in a holy tranquillity, amidst all the unequal motions of this life: it will make us stand upright, even among the ruins of the great fall of the whole building of nature, when heaven and earth shall tremble and shrink, hasting to a dissolution. He is

sure to be fed, who is able to believe; find out the word, and God will find out the deed; tell Him what He hath said, and He will make it good. He never yet was worse than His word, or compounded for less than due, with any whom His promise made His creditor. Joshua challenges all Israel to show but the one thing God had failed them in, of all the good things He had spoke concerning them. Josh. xxiii. 14. "Faith," which "is the substance of things not seen," doubts not of food, though we see no corn; despairs not of clothes, though we have no flax; wants not a sacrifice, though we have no herd. Hab. iii. 17, 18. Faith loves no disputes; hates all doubtful reasonings; banishes all carnal objections; sets not providences against promises; triumphs over all seeming contradictions; looks upon the greatest impediments as difficulties, which cannot check, but only magnify Almightiness. There is no question left where God's promise is engaged; there are no objections against faith, nothing impossible to him that

can believe; no desert without provision; no dungeon without light; no fiery trial without comfort; no valley of tears without a door of hope. Never fear (saith faith) to urge the promises, to put the bond in suit; thou hast law on thy side; bills and bonds must be paid; a good man will be as good as his word, much more a good God. He, that was so free as to make them, will be so faithful as to make them good.

Why then do we stumble at every straw? Why are we of doubtful minds? And why do thoughts arise in our hearts? It is time enough to be distrustful when we have a want He cannot supply; a danger He cannot prevent or remove; a disease He cannot heal or mitigate; an enemy He cannot overcome or reconcile; a Red Sea He cannot dry up or divide; a wall He cannot throw down or help us over. He who sways the sceptre of the universe, and lets loose or binds up the creatures' influences at His pleasure; keeps the lions from eating one prophet, Dan. vi. 22, and the fish from

digesting another, Jonah i. 17, and ii. 10; the fire from touching three captives in a burning furnace, Dan. iii. 27; supplies the Israelites forty years, where they neither sow nor reap, toil, beg, nor steal, Deut. viii. 3, 4; Neh. ix. 21; alters the course of nature and the hearts of men; removes all impediments for their succour, defence, advantage; clothes the naked trees; recovers the verdure of the forlorn earth; exalts the setting sun in its beauty and brightness; spreads every day a table where all may reach convenient food; in the time of famine plants a corn-field in the bottom of a barrel of meal, for Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 16, and an olive-yard in a cruise, for the widow of Sareptah; fills empty Naomi with a famous offspring, Ruth iv. 17; gives Amaziah much more than he had parted with to the army of Israel, 2 Chron. xxv. 9, and Job double for what He took from him, Job xlii. 10; restores to His penitents what the locusts and caterpillars had eaten, Joel ii. 25; accomplishes His promise of incredible plenty in Samaria, and

yet rains it not from heaven, 2 Kings vii. 1; recompenses to His people the comforts of health and liberty, which sickness had impaired; of relations and friends, which the grave had devoured; of houses and estates, which the fire had consumed; builds His temple against all plots and scandals, weapons and oppositions; discomfits the Philistines by Jonathan and his armour-bearer, 1 Sam. xiv.; delivers Asa with a handful, in comparison of a thousand thousand, 2 Chron. xiv. 8, etc.; Hezekiah from Sennacherib, 2 Kings xix. 35; Jehoshaphat from the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, 2 Chron. xx.—there is none saved by the multitude of an host, Acts xii. 23—subdues a mighty prince by an army mustered of His meanest creatures; routs an innumerable host with a few trumpets, lamps, and pitchers, more likely to frighten children than armed men, Judges vii. 20, etc.; discountenances any design, if His eye be but against it. If He but hiss, His enemies come with speed, and revenge His quarrel against themselves,

Isa. v. 26; let Him but arise, and His enemies are scattered, Psalm lxviii. 1. With the turning of His hand He turns them into hell. Not a creature in heaven, earth, or hell, but has an ear to hear Him; and stand ready pressed, at His commission, to perform His pleasure, when He lifts up His ensign against His enemies, for His friends. What can stand before a creating power? Who can resist or oppose infinite strength and Almightiness? He can do what He will; and will do for His what is best, according to the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness.

Henceforth then I will employ that time I used to spend in disquieting thoughts, about the things that disturbed me; in acts of love and praise, submission and resignation, faith and confidence in God. I cannot want or abound, but from Thee, who givest before Thou takest, and takest but what Thou gavest. Give me what Thou wilt, so Thou give me contentment with it. Frame my heart to my estate, so I shall have an estate to my heart; and not want when I have least,

because as free from desire as superfluity. Religion teaches a man to be without that, which others know not how to want; and an ability to be content with a little, is to be more truly rich, than the having much without being satisfied. I should be much ashamed that any should be found more content, among all those that have less. Had I store I would not impoverish myself by covetousness; now poor, I will not make a little less by murmuring, but enrich myself by content. So I shall have enough, with less trouble and danger, duty and reckoning: I shall never pay for what I have; I hold all in Christ our Head, 1 Cor. iii. 21, etc. I have all, with the love and favour of a reconciled God, with a blessing, with the pardon of my sins, with a thankful heart, and as a pledge of eternal mercies. While others grumble in looking on great men's estates; I will tremble to think on their accounts; and study more how to give a good one of my little, than how to make it more. Plentiful provisions enhance the

reckoning. God's bounty sets all His gifts on the file; the worst servant confessed to the having, though he employed not, his talent. Have I not more than I can give a good account of my spending well? Are not my receipts great enough already? Must I complain that I have not more to answer for? Rich men, like sumpter-horses, travel all day under a burden of some rich treasure, at night lie down in a foul stable with galled backs, in the grave with galled distressed consciences. Many at the great day will rejoice they had no more, while others shall wish they had not had so much.

CHAPTER III.

Encouragement from the Righteousness of God.

CONSIDER His absolute and unerring righteousness, whereby He is infinitely just in Himself, and by the highest most perfect rule of equity His will governs all His

creatures; He doth them no wrong; he can do no wrong. Then, "wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" Lam. iii. 39.

We are men, a mercy so outweighing any temporal suffering, as may well transport us with joy and admiration under them. "What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him? and that Thou shouldst set Thine heart upon him? and that Thou shouldst visit him every moment?" Job vii. 17, 18. The nobility of our nature should advance us, shame us, into a more cheerful exalted frame and temper: we ought rather humbly to thank, than fretfully to murmur against Him: being so far from deserving any favour, that we are not worthy a blow. It is too much honour to us for Him to contend with us: an ignoble contest! "What is man, that Thou visitest him?" teachest, takest particular notice, yea, such special care of him, as to reclaim, or stop him in his wandering, and correct as well as feed him? A sign He had not forgotten him. The rod of

discipline, in His hand, becomes a sceptre of honour in ours.

We are but men in a state of dependence, subordination, subjection and suffering: and "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Rom. ix. 20. Infinitely above us, unaccountable to us, supreme Lord over us! It belongs not to us, in our militant state, to choose our station, but to behave ourselves well in it. Every one must not, cannot be a commander; and common soldiers are not to counsel or dispute, but to observe and obey their General; whether it be to fight in the field, or dig in the trench, or to stand upon the watch. It is as reasonable to refuse submission to Him in what He commands, as in what He inflicts. The world is but a stage on which we act; it is of very little matter what part ours is, so we act it well; a comedian may get as much applause by acting the slave as the conqueror. Every condition hath its uneasiness: so that when we court a change, we rather seek to *vary* than *end* our miseries.

We must expect briers and thorns, who have changed our condition, and voluntarily translated ourselves into another soil; and have no reason to be grieved at the native incumbrances and inconveniences of it, or to expect freedom from them; to meet with nothing but the pleasures of a garden, who have turned ourselves out of it, into a wilderness.

Men repine at what is extraordinary and unusual, not general and common to all. In vain we murmur at what is natural, or at what we cannot remedy; and afflict ourselves with a fatal necessity, which involves monarchs and peasants. The philosopher handsomely reproached the impatience of the Persian king, for the death of his wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could but help him to the names of three men, that had never grieved, to write them upon her tomb. Solon, seeing a friend of his much oppressed with grief, carried him up to a tower, that overlooked the city of Athens, and showing him all the buildings, said to

him, "Consider how many sorrows have, do, and shall in future ages, inhabit under all these roofs, and do not vex thyself with the inconveniences, which are common to mortality, as if they were only yours." "If there were," saith Socrates, "a common bank made of all men's troubles, most men would rather choose to take those they brought, than to venture upon a new dividend."

We must reverse God's fundamental law before we can hope for a total freedom from suffering. All that any man can aspire to, is to have but an equal share: and the generality of men have it; at least, none can prove that he hath not. He is an ill member of the community who would shuffle off all payments in public assessments: who, in this common tax, which God hath laid upon our nature, is not content to bear his share? We must build a world apart, and not be content with the elements that served our ancestors' turn; or bear the miseries of human nature, and be one of those several companies of mourners that make up man-

kind, whose showers of tears almost everywhere water, not to say overflow this vale of tears. When I have least, and suffer most, I will try how I am able to live with less, and suffer more; and prove by my cheerfulness, in what some call want and misery, that happiness consists not in superfluity or ease. I will praise God for deeming me worthy to serve as a trial of human nature; to see to how high a pitch patience can mount. Good men, that strongly encounter all adversities, little consider their spectators. If the Searcher of hearts found us not fit, he would never honour us with so hard employment.

We are living men, so may see better days, or improve these to our great advantage, who might be past all possibility of retrieving our errors, or escaping eternal miseries; on this side of which, the greatest evils are below, the least favour above our deserts. If our griefs be short, they deserve no great complaint; if long, their lastingness fashions us to patience. Life is dearer than any other

temporal mercy; the wages of sin is death. "But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey," Jer. xlv. 5, was in God's account enough to silence all Baruch's complaints, amidst all the miseries of a sad captivity. And in most deplorable times, the church is commanded not only to bless God, but to praise Him aloud, for that signal mercy, that God keeps life and soul together, and keeps them upon their feet, notwithstanding all the rage and violence of their enemies. "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard; which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved," Psalm lxvi. 8, 9.

We are sinners, so all the plagues we are capable of, in this and the other world, are but our due: if God abate anything of this, He punishes us less than our iniquities deserve; and we have more reason to praise Him for His mercy, than to complain of and repine at His just and equal dealings. A man for the punishment of his sin! If he be but a man, have but rational principles,

he must needs acknowledge the equity of suffering for sin, and of being patient under it; whereby He endeavours to heal and reclaim us, if He be patient towards us in our sinning against Him, whereby we oppose and provoke Him. The haughty monarch, when returned to his wits, harped upon the right string. "Those that walk in pride, He is able to abase," Dan. iv. 37. The heathen prince, looking upon his hands and feet, laid his finger on the right sore, when he said, "As I have done, so God hath requited me," Judges i. 7. The thief had so much honesty and ingenuousness, as to confess acquiescence, under his deserved punishment, reasonable. "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds," Luke xxiii. 41. Joseph's brethren hit the nail on the head, in saying one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us," Gen xlii. 21. May we not all say, Am not

I verily guilty concerning my estate, my health, my reputation, etc.? And will not conscience answer, Spake I not unto thee saying, Do not sin against it, and thou wouldst not hear? Therefore behold that also is required.

Whatsoever be the instruments, the Lord is righteous: the stroke is straight, though the stick be crooked. The justice of His dealings is always visible, though the reason be not. His righteousness is like the great mountains, when His judgments are a great deep, Psalm xxxvi. 6. Though sin be not always the particular reason why He afflicts us, yet there is sufficient reason for it on account of sin. He never strikes, but He strikes a sinner that deserves more than he suffers. Without Him I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing, I deserve nothing, I am worse than nothing; there would be no loss to me if I was brought to nothing. I cannot date my afflictions from the first day of my pollution, or of my enjoyment of His blessings. There are, that have never a

good day in all their lives; not a day of health, gladness, respect, among all their days of sickness, sadness, and reproach. My sufferings are not so many as my sins, as my mercies, as God may exercise me with, as have befallen others, as my Saviour's, as the joys of heaven.

We have received, we expect great things at God's hand; but what hath He from ours? Would every man as duly ponder how much he is short of his duty, as what he wants of his desires, he would think it a very gentle composition to have the one unsupplied, so he might have the other remitted, and see abundant cause to sit down contentedly, and say with honest Mephibosheth, "What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?" 2 Sam. xix. 28. Doth He remove a comfort we have not forfeited; or lay on an affliction we have not deserved? Whose obedience hath been in any degree proportionable to his obligations? I may challenge the best man to cast up the account of his best day, and tell me, whether his

receipts have not infinitely exceeded his disbursements. Whether, for any one good thing he hath done, he hath not received many. Did we diligently employ ourselves in reflecting upon God's mercies, and our own guilt, we should find little leisure, and less reason, to lament our afflictions, but should turn our complaints upon ourselves; and, seeing them both so numerous, be astonished at God's goodness, in continuing His blessings in despite of all our provocations; and at our own baseness, in continuing our provocations in spite of those blessings.

That every wicked imagination, every black design, is not at once defeated and punished with infatuation and frenzy; that every blasphemous atheistical speech doth not wither the tongue; every forbidden act fix us as perpetual monuments of Divine vengeance; that every wilful neglect puts us not beyond all possibility of enjoying another opportunity for attaining eternal happiness; how much soever our punishments are short of

our guilt, we owe to the gentleness and compassion of God. Instead of complaining of so many evils, I may well be thankful I lie under no more, who have deserved so much; and account everything a favour on this side hell. Blessed be God that He hath dealt so kindly by me, as to leave me anything, and hath not taken away all, when all was at His service. He sets down fifty for a hundred, Luke xvi. 6; His severest dispensations are merciful abatements of sin's just demerit. When my case is most sad, it might be much worse: He breaks the staff of my outward comfort, He might take away my inward cordials: He afflicts my body, He might wound my conscience: this cross might have been a curse: He ruins my estate, He might remove Himself; He lops off the branches, He might cast root and branch, body and soul into hell. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; pained, but not damned; holden

in the cords of affliction, but not under chains of darkness: were it death, He is not yet come to the end of His rod. The worst we can feel here is not the thousandth part of what we have deserved hereafter. He visits our transgressions with rods, and our iniquities with stripes; when He might chastise us with scorpions, and take His loving-kindness utterly from us. What is a paroxysm of the gout or stone, to rolling on the scalding billows of His eternal vengeance? What is a fever, a sick bed, to the bed of flames, where the fit never goes off, the worm never dies, the fire is not quenched? If He will not always chide, neither keep His anger for ever, He deals not with us after our sins, nor rewards us according to our iniquities. Let it for ever check all querulous passionate reasonings against Him, who inflicts but temporal punishments, that might make us eternally miserable: corrects us with the rod of affliction, who might as justly break us with a rod of iron, and dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel.

CHAPTER IV.

Encouragement from the Sovereignty of God.

REFLECT upon His independent, absolute, unlimited sovereignty. Discontent under suffering is a striving and contending with God; opposing and controlling His dealings, as unequal and unadvised; charging Him with tyranny, as if He went out of the way of justice, when He treads over our line, and transgresses the bounds we have set Him. It argues we would, if we could, revenge ourselves upon Him, because we give way to that passion which prompts to revenge. But, may we, that made not, govern and dispose of ourselves; or choose our station, more than we did what creatures we should be? Is it not fit we should be at His finding and ordering, whose workmanship we are; and as entirely render up ourselves unto His will, as we proceeded from it? Shall we not allow Him the common privilege of all proprietors?

Is not His interest and dominion infinitely more absolute than ours, over ourselves and ours? May He not do what He will with His own? Ungrateful wretches are we! To be more sensible of the loss, than the enjoyment, of what He freely lent us for so long a time as He thought fit! To complain of that as our injury, which is but restitution of that which He made us not so much as a lease for any set term, without a clause of revocation at pleasure. The greatest monarchs hold their crowns and kingdoms of Him, and may be turned out at pleasure, at less than an hour's warning. Do we look upon the Owner and Keeper, as if He came to rob us, when He calls it in; and not rather dismiss it with thankfulness to Him for lending it us so long? Whose will should take place? Whose pleasure should be procured? Henceforth, my soul, deny thyself, or deny thyself to be a creature. Be wholly at His disposal, or call Him not thy sovereign. He will do what He ought: He can do thee no wrong. If He send, say not,

What do ye? Losing my life, or livelihood; it is even as the Lord hath commanded, and straightway let it go. Let there be no strife between thee and Him, between thy will and His, for He is thy Sovereign. Is not the whole land, O self, before thee? Hast not thou enough, yea too much, room already in others' breasts? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me, and I shall behold all the plains of my lowest estate, even as the garden of God.

We can never have any settled peace, until we commit ourselves quietly to Him. Safety is farthest off from those, who so little esteem His will that they prefer their own before it. Let Him see that we can as composedly rest ourselves upon Him, as if it were in our own hands to do what we list; which is the only way to please Him: and we can never be pleased unless we think that He is so too. It is the mastery of our will over our reason, which breeds all our inward tumults and disorders: there is no possibility of curbing its insolence, but by

committing it to Him who can alone order the unruly wills of men. To him that, in spite of all the reluctances of sense, entirely submits his will to God's, God will send either some outward allays, or such inward comfort and support, as shall counterpoise the affliction He takes not off. And nothing but experience can fully inform us of the unmistakable calmness, serenity, and happiness of that soul, who hath resigned his will to God: all his care and choosing for himself is now happily superseded; he is tempted to no anxious forecasts of future events; as knowing that nothing can happen in contradiction to that supreme will to which he is wholly resigned: which will certainly choose for him, with the care and tenderness of an indulgent father, for His child that casts itself into His arms. His honour, as well as His compassion, is concerned in the relief of all who do Him service, and depend upon Him, and who have surrendered themselves to Him.

Our wills, that before were liable to per-

petual defeats, in this blessed combination, can never be crossed, controlled, or resisted. By this means, those things that are repugnant to our sensitive natures are yet very agreeable to our spirits, when we consider, that they are implicitly our own choice, since they are His, whom we have deputed to choose for us. And, having surrendered our wills to His, we shall, without much pain, let Him take anything else: let us but make sure of resignation, and content will flow in, without any further industry. With our wills, we shall certainly divest ourselves of all solicitudes, cares, and fruitless anxieties, which perpetually harassed us. Cast our burden upon Him who invites us to it; and He who bears all our sins, will bear also all our sorrows and griefs. It is our own will and desire, that it should be with us as it is, or we fearfully dissemble with God, when we say, "Thy will be done." And, are we discontented that we have our will; that our prayers are answered? Shall we set up our wills, not only against His, but

our own ; be displeased that our requests are granted ; repine that His will, and therewith our will is done? Can there be anything in the will of God that His servants should inordinately fear ; the fulfilling of which is the care, desire, and business of their lives? Every commission is signed originally in heaven ; and God will not set His hand to anything that is really hurtful to His children.

Though our troubles immediately proceed from second, from natural causes, they are but as instruments of His invisible hand, and governed by His counsel, to do His pleasure. By being violent against the instrument, we therein oppose the principal agent. Afflictions are not accidental or casual, but directed, disposed, and managed by Him, who doth nothing at random, or at a peradventure ; but with excellent wisdom, and for excellent ends ; even for the good and advantage of mankind in general, and particularly of those who seem most to suffer by them. Men are but ministers of

His permissive providence, to put it in execution. He wills that in righteousness and judgment, which they act with so much malice, cruelty, and injustice. "Let him alone, and let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David," 2 Sam. xvi. 10, 11. He doth God's errand, though he vent his own malice. Which may well make us, friends, at peace, in perfect charity with second causes: to be so much in love with the will of our heavenly Father, as even to fall in love with whatsoever serves it: viewing them all in His hand, readily doing His pleasure. It is a childish cur-like thing, to beat the rod, or bite the stone: we will rather admire and delight in their subserviency to Him, than malign their severe influences upon us. Why repine ye at injuries, reproaches, or sicknesses? Why trouble ye the persons? They have wrought a good work; they execute His will; they have an errand to me from Him; how could they come except they were sent? All distempers march under His standard; advance

and retire under the shadow of His command. The voice of my disease is, Am I come up hither without the Lord to afflict thee? The Lord hath said to me, Go up against this man, and afflict him (Isa. xxxvi. 10).

The great God is willing to be pleased with what we do; but we are not pleased with what He doth. He finds no fault with our duties, though attended with many defects, if done in sincerity; we find fault with His providences, though there is nothing in them but what bespeaks infinite wisdom and goodness. As if God were our steward, not our Lord, we require of Him with a confidence proper only to those who ask their own; whilst what we offer to Him is with such an irreverent careless hand, as if we meant it rather an alms than an homage. Beggars must not be choosers: he is a presumptuous child that will make choice of his own rod. He deserves to be cashiered, to have his name blotted out of Christ's muster-roll, who is not ready cheerfully to march through all ways and weathers, to ac-

complish his General's design: he is of a degenerate spirit indeed, whom the example of his Captain will not animate; that will take no share of the hazards and hardships of his Leader; that will not follow Him with alacrity through all the difficulties He traces before us.

To follow Him murmuring, not only extremely discredits Him, but is all one as if we stayed behind. If we bear our burdens with a perpetual vexation, we deprive ourselves of the crown of patience, the value whereof is inestimable, as the force of it hath been judged in all times invincible, and hath made the prosperous envy their sufferings, who on the dunghill, in a dungeon, at the stake, have continued under more grateful, hopeful circumstances than those that scorned, reproached, or executed them; fearlessly beheld the racks and engines prepared for them; been thankful to those that condemned them; and regarded their executioners with the same eye St. Peter did the angel, that brake off his fetters to restore

him to freedom; cheerfully received them, as those who brought the keys of paradise in the same hand wherewith they brought their swords; laughed at torments; courted flames; went out to meet death in its blackest dress, their minds still remaining erect and unbroken; bearing the weight of all sufferings with courage, constancy, and rejoicing. Patience hath clothed the brow with confidence to face the storms, to entertain the challenges of earth and hell; and hath forced such expressions of strength and fixedness, as hath amazed the feeble world, and shamed the daring infidel into strange convictions of the reward and gain of godliness, and its approaching triumph; whilst all the glory of this terrestrial state is easily turned into blackness and disdain. So distempered, crazy, and rotten, is the impatient, unresigned soul, that he would be carried through the world in a sedan, being unable to be jogged or disturbed in his way: to him the grasshopper is a burden, a light affliction grievous. Every minute of our tranquillity

is purchased with patience. He that is sincere and patient cannot miss of joy; he that shrinks from and murmurs under his burden, on his death-bed will remember, that, by that time, all his sorrows had been past, and nothing remaining for him but rest and reward. Others suffer more, only the patient receive the advantages and recompence of Christian suffering.

The unquiet workings of our heart are their unmannerly replies against God. I see His hand at the bottom of the warrant, that keeps the peace in my soul, and makes me not concerned what I suffer, but with what mind, how much I make of it, and shall receive for it; not to strive so much against affliction as against displeasure. Removing punishment, may leave a greater, though insensible one in its room. He shall not offend me with punishment: so He punish me not with offending Him. It may admit a question, Whether it be a more admirable Christian exercise to do good, or to endure evil? Doing is but one part of my work,

I must also suffer the will of God; which I may well do with more cheerfulness, because I can do it only in this life. Let me suffer His will while I may, for I shall suffer but awhile, but I shall eternally do it without suffering; where my passive, as well as my active obedience, shall be remembered and rewarded. The Almighty's sequestrations are but better compositions. I know, all shall work together for my good; therefore, if it be for my good, let this cup pass from me; still if it be for my good, let it remain with me, until Thou hast purged out my corruptions, perfected my patience, beautified my faith, strengthened my dependence, raised me entirely from all earthly delights to heavenly.

O when shall I have done quarrelling and murmuring, fretting and repining, carking and caring? When shall I be humble and meek; conformable, silent, and dependent; contented and cheerfully compliant? When shall I, not out of necessity, or with reluctancy, but from choice, not only submit, but

assent to, and justify Thee in all Thy dispensations? Not only bear and accept of the rod, but kiss it; look up, adore, and think worthy and honourable thoughts of Thee? When shall Thy interests be so wholly planted and established in my soul, as that no other may be able to grow there? When shall I quit all selfish ends, and be freely at Thy disposal; reckon, and endeavour it as my only interest to serve Thy will; my greatest perfection to be nothing in myself, to have nothing of my own distinct from Thee, to commit all to Thee, to be great in Thee, to be filled with Thee; not to reckon anything I have, but despise it in comparison of Thee; live to and for Thee; enjoy all things as in and under Thee?

Behold, I stand ready here for Thy service; I am prepared for any employment, I am girt for any encounter; do with me what Thou wilt; deal as Thou pleasest with me; raise me, or depress me; lift me up, or cast me down; lead me to the right hand or to the left; turn me to what side Thou pleasest:

I am Thine, and at Thy disposal. Thou hast lent me to, but not for, myself. If Thou wilt afflict me, afflict me; if Thou wilt try me, try me. If my patience must serve Thee in poverty; if my disgrace must glorify Thy truth; if my shame must honour my God; my poverty shall be my riches; my disgrace shall be my honour; my shame shall be my glory; my affliction shall be my happiness; my service shall be my reward. Use me as Thou pleasest, so Thou use me to Thy glory: and so I am sure Thou wilt; for otherwise than this Thou canst not do. Thou canst not deny Thine own glory, and therefore Thou canst not govern me amiss, who always esteem myself well used, where I serve Thy honour in the world, though in the lowest office or sharpest affliction. I submit to Thy direction, I follow Thee without reply, dispute, or delay, or hesitation; for, what shall I get by resistance, but to be dragged weeping, and being evil, to bear what I might do sincerely by being good?

CHAPTER

Encouragement from the Wisdom of God.

MEDITATE upon His infinite wisdom, whereby He distinctly knows all things, past, present, and to come. All obscure administrations, which seem so full of casual neglect, promiscuous scatterings, and wild contingencies, are no disorder to Him, but admirable contrivance and regularity. The thoughts of men, the hearts of kings, are in the hands of God. By His certain disposal, there is a necessity in every seemingly undetermined casualty. (Gen. xxii. 13, 14; 1 Sam. ix. 15, 16.) He who is unawares accidentally slain by another, is delivered into his hands by God (Exod. xxi. 13). An arrow, shot at random, was directed by Him to fulfil the prediction of Ahab's death (1 Kings xxii. 34). Amidst popular tumults and inundations, commotions and public confusions, "the Lord reigneth, let

the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof," Psa. xcvii. 1. Though things seem huddled together, and to run at random, there is a wheel within a wheel (Ezek. i. 16), that turns every, yea, the least wheel; in them the eye of Providence, that, with deliberate care and forecast, directs them in their turning and revolutions to the best and most certain issue. "His kingdom ruleth over all," Psa. ciii. 19.

This may justly check our extravagant thoughts that would either presume to know all the hidden ends of Omniscience, or peremptorily judge of the fitness of means to ends unknown. And may reduce our discomposed, to composed minds, notwithstanding all changes, alterations, or seeming confusions; to conclude that economy wisest which is chosen by a wisdom so boundless, that can at once survey all expedients; and so unbiassed, that it hath no interest to choose any one but for its being the fittest. The great Physician of mankind knows their various tempers and distempers; weighs and

measures out the quality, quantity and durations of their sufferings; directs and orders them, as He sees most behoveful for recovery or prevention: He is too compassionate, too wise, to let His distracted patients prescribe their own course of physic, or have their clamorous will; or to permit our fond and peevish cavils, shuffle and discompose those mysterious profound contrivances, whose wisdom engages the attention and exacts the wonder of angels.

How long then, my soul, will it be ere thou make an end of murmuring words? Mark, and afterwards, if thou canst, speak on. Shall God alter the methods of His governing the world to humour and comply with ignorant and inconstant man? "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? Shall the rock be removed out of its place?" Job xviii. 2, etc. Shall the axe lift up itself against him that heweth therewith? This is a jest indeed! He that formed the intellectual eye, shall not He see? He that made intellectual spirits, shall not He under-

stand? He looks upon all the world at once, sees what reference one part hath to another, and disposes the affairs of particular nations and persons, how fatal soever calamities and their consequences may be to them, as may serve and attain His great design.

He overlooks Satan's conclave, what evil designs are hatched and plotted against His people: and can not only frustrate their utmost policies and endeavours, but make them frustrate themselves, to accomplish those very ends they had designed to defeat: so that, when they seek to shun, they promote by their striving against. Thus the contrivers of Babel went to make themselves a name, and, to prevent dispersion, had laid their plot so hopeful, that they had engaged no less than mankind; and designs raised like their intended fabric, as high as heaven, for so high indeed they built; God saw them all the while. But the policy of the ambitious builders, being contrary to the charitable decree of God, to have the earth peopled,

He made use of that very conspiracy that brought them together, to effect that which they conspired to prevent. So that now, the remotest parts of the inhabited world are but the colonies of Babel, whose scattered architects have indeed made themselves a name, but upon quite a contrary account than they intended or expected.

Thus, the purblind envy of Joseph's brethren, having made them resolve to prevent his dream of future superiority over them, thought, by selling him for a slave, they had taken sufficient order that he should never come to be their master. But his being sold into Egypt was made use of by the wise Orderer of human affairs, to make him, in effect, lord both of it and them. His nearness to slaughter, his being merchandized, his danger by the rage of his mistress, his imprisonment, his suffering such misfortunes, as might seem an oversight and neglect of Providence—as if He had forgotten the promotion Joseph was designed for—did all mightily conduce not only to his advance-

ment, but safety and preservation of his whole family, which was then the visible Church. So that, if each of his brethren had given him as much money as they sold him for, it had not been so great a kindness as he received from their intended cruelty.

Thus the proud favourite of Ahasuerus ate the fruit of that tree which himself planted: questionless he thought he could scarce miss his end, when he provided for Mordecai that fatal gibbet, which, if he had not erected, probably himself might have escaped; nor been forced to hold the stirrup to his only eye-sore, and to be herald of his honour; and at last, hanged up, a public spectacle of scorn and contempt, without any remains or appearances of his former honour; unless this was it, that the gallows he hung on was so many cubits higher than for the rabble of vulgar malefactors.

Thus David, after he was promised and anointed to be king, could scarce live a quiet life with his countrymen; instead of being brought up at court, as a king's son,

he had not the favour of a common subject; but hunted up and down, till at last driven quite out of his kingdom into the wilderness, like a common outlaw, and there followed by a company of discontented persons, ready, on every trifling occasion, to revolt from him, as before from Saul, if not to stone him; spoiled of his goods, wives, children, etc., yet was this distress in the event contrived to his advantage: for having afterwards pursued the Amalekites, he not only recovers his own, but an abundance of other spoil from them, as served him for rich presents, to renew and confirm the friendship of his well-wishers in Israel; that after the death of Saul, which presently followed, he might, by their free vote, be chosen to succeed him.

Thus Jonah, when sent to Nineveh about so weighty a matter as the safety of that great and populous city, and that too when their destruction was within ken, but forty days off, that he should now make delays, flee to Tarshish, and upon such a strait run

himself into hazards, might seem to argue some carelessness in the government of Providence; yet this his offence was so wisely managed in the event, that it mightily advantaged the main end of his errand, which it seemed most directly to oppose. His danger, and miraculous deliverance, being related, probably, by the mariners, was a special occasion why his preaching proved so successful.

Thus Augustus in taxing his subjects, paid tribute to the King of heaven; he brings stones to build God's temple, whilst he intends to raise his own exchequer; his political action had an ecclesiastical aspect; his end in taxing the world, which was to fill his coffers and enrich himself, is used by God as a means to fulfil the prophecy of Christ's birth at Bethlehem.

Thus the dissension between Paul and Barnabas, when the Christian Church was in its beginning and infancy; that the two chief founders and members of it should fall at variance among themselves, seemed

such an unseasonable breach, that an enemy could not have wished a worse: what could more thwart the promulgation of the gospel of peace than the contentions of those that preached it? Yet by these two parting asunder, like two mighty streams, spreading themselves several ways, wondrously conduced to the watering the barren thirsty corners of the world.

Thus the old Serpent himself, even in his chief master-piece, found himself the most over-matched. No doubt he highly applauded his own subtlety, and seemed to have taken the likeliest way devisable to his impious end, when, having made Herod and Pilate friends, to make them joint enemies to Christ, upon such terms, that the Lamb of God should be the victim of their new confederacy, he had brought the Jews and Gentiles to conspire against their common Saviour; engaging them in a ruinous and tragic conspiracy to kill the Prince of life; and by that unparalleled crime at once to destroy the devil's chief enemy, and make God

theirs: yet the event sufficiently manifested the wisdom of God: this pursued Prey overcame the seeming conqueror, and made all His followers sharers in the conquest. Death and the devil, by getting, lost the victory: for, whilst Death fed but as a waiter on sin's trencher; or, with Noah's crow, on the carrion of corruption, the whole world was both its slaughter-house and kitchen; but when it would needs, with Judas, be swallowing the indigestible piece of immortality that could not see corruption, the Lord of life, he was choked by the attempt; he broke in sunder, and all his bowels gushed out; the dead that slept arose; and that sting of death stuck fast in that empty grave, that swallowed death itself in victory: so that all those whose sins are there buried, are enabled triumphantly to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55. The heart of Pharaoh's daughter weeps over the tears of Moses; she pays his own mother for nursing her own son; brings him up like a prince in

Egypt, to be prince of Israel. God makes His enemies foster and bring up their own supplanter and destroyer.

Wherever the Church's enemies are, in respect of their place; or whatsoever, in regard of their persons; howsoever joined or disjoined, in regard of their affections; all their projects and practices, even amidst their mutual jars, conspire in a sacred harmony, as if they were entered into a holy league, or solemn sacred combination for, and shall all end in, the good of His chosen Saith Martin Luther to the Elector of Saxony (perceiving the cause of the Church to go backward), 'Let your highness be sure, the Church's business is far otherwise ordered in heaven than it is by the Emperor and states of Nurinberg.' 'And I am glad that Christ is King; for otherwise, I had been utterly out of heart and hope,' saith Myconius, in a letter to Calvin, 'upon view of the Church's enemies.'

Limit not God to means: let Him choose His own weapons, to fight His own battle.

So long as He hath a *cause* in the world, He can never want ways to maintain it, who by His death conquered all His enemies, and the kingdoms of the earth, with one file of poor fishermen, whose greatest art and policy lay in mending their nets and laying snares for the silly fish. The Church's enemies cannot approve themselves so malicious as they are: God sometimes so holds them in, that standers-by think them favourable. "It is in the power of my hand (saith Laban to Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 29) to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Thank him for nought! He could do him hurt, but God would not let him Let men use what means they please, He hath still the security of the end. Whoever rules, He over-rules; and will prevent or order disorders.

And shall we have so fond regard to ourselves as not to be content, that the wisdom of God should serve His own turn in man-

aging all? Be so narrow, private-spirited, as to expect all His providences, in governing the world should centre in our present particular conveniency and happiness? Human events, and several persons' interests, are so interwoven by Him, that they have a mutual dependence among themselves; and their meetings, which we think casual, are twice necessary, both as His decree, and for many ends. We must consider ourselves as pieces of the universe, and engines which that great Workman sets on going for executing His ends; which being all good, all means tending to them must be also. We must therefore bear our crosses, not only with patience, but joy and thankfulness, accounting ourselves happy that we are instruments in His hand to do His work and advance His glory: which must needs highly please Him, doing that willingly which others do out of constraint. How great an evil is discontent with our allotment! By desiring to have our will in one particular, we perhaps should cross God in a thousand He hath to

bring about; because it is possible a thousand things may depend upon that one thing we would have to be otherwise than it is. I will be henceforth willing to be crossed in some few things, that His work may go on in all; and His end attained or furthered in many things, by the one thing I am crossed in.

It is impossible every humour should be satisfied, because particular desires, besides their opposition to one another, are inconsistent with the general design. That difference which there is between particular things, times, and persons, much conduces to the beauty and conveniency of the whole; while some particular events, singly considered, seem prejudicial. The whole contexture of affairs, in their operation, shall prove in the issue for the best to those that love God. We forget we are all servants to the same Master, who disposes all the concerns of men by an unerring wisdom, and is alone to determine the place we shall serve Him in. We think, that Providence, which governs others, should only serve us; and

distribute to us not what He, but ourselves, think good. We murmur at a Prince for indulging anything to a private favourite, to the public disadvantage; and we murmur at God for not doing the like. It is great insolence in me to think He should be more concerned to humour me, than those multitudes of others who have the same appetites and affections. Most men desire more, but every man desires to keep what he hath; and how should one part of the world be supplied, without the diminution of the other? If God satisfy not all, why should any particular person look that his appetite alone should be indulged?

The common Father of mankind disposes things for the public advantage of this great family; and there cannot be a more vile contempt of His wisdom than sullenly to dispute His choice and orders. Men look upon themselves as single persons, without reference to the community whereof they are members; else they would rather endeavour to become their places, wherein they

are set, than be perpetually projecting for a change. Would we honestly and diligently employ ourselves where God hath set us, we should find it a direct road to advancement; or to have a better effect, that is, sweeten our present condition, divert our minds from mutinous reflections on others' height and our own lowness. God hath placed none of us in so barren a soil, so forlorn a state, but there is something in it which may afford us comfort; if we husband that to the utmost, it is scarce imaginable what improvement even he that appears the most miserable may make of his condition. But if, in a sullen humour, we quarrel at what we should enjoy, and will not cultivate our own field, because we have more mind to our neighbour's, we may thank ourselves if we starve or die of discontent. It is surely but a modest demand on the behalf of God, that we should allow Him as much privilege in this world as every peasant claims in his cottage, to be Master there, and dispose of His household as He thinks fit; to say to this servant

Stand thou, Work thou there; to another, Do this, and he doeth it. And would we afford God this liberty, there would be an immediate end put to all clamours and complaints. And when we are content with His allowance, then, like the Israelites' manna, it is very good, there is a blessing in it; but when we will be reaching out, gathering more, or would keep it longer than God would have us, there will be worms, nothing that is good, in it.

Wish events according to the secret order of the grand Disposer, looking on all not as casualties but commands, and thou shalt always have thy will; nothing can fall out contrary to it, if thou totally deniest it, and transformest it unto His; and desirest no more in thy heart than thou mayest lawfully ask of Him in prayer. Let us not create such diseases to ourselves as we cannot declare to our Physician. When we address ourselves to God for relief, let us seriously consider, and single out those desires that are worthy of that solemn depre-

cation; and we shall then find we have in that prejudged all our former discontents, as frivolous or wicked. And then sure we cannot think fit to harbour them, but must for shame dismiss them, since they are such as we dare not avow to Him from whom alone we can expect relief. The more impatient my longings are, the less in reason should be my hopes; for mutiny is no such endearing quality as to render any man a darling to God. The discontented man is angry with God, for which, to be sure, God is angry with him. Nothing pleases Him better than a quiet submission. Fretting never removed, but hath always weightened, a burden; nor procured, but prevented, many a blessing. The Father continues to correct the froward child. Submission gains us the thing we desire, or what is better for us. What we get by discontent, we seldom enjoy with comfort. He will satisfy our wills, when we can submit to His: not easily deny our suit, when we can deny ourselves. None stay longer at heaven's gate than he

who will be served at first knock : he speeds best who delivers in his petition, and stays until God please to answer. We often shorten our mercies by hastening them : He doubles them by delaying, and makes us amends both for our prayers and patience.

No policy can provide against all events, but that which advises us to forsake the place where they are, and so carry us up, out of ourselves and our own wills, into the will of God, where all is a perfect serenity, lie down in peace and concord together. To such there is no enemy, nothing is contrary ; all things serve them, and fall out to them as they would ; having no will of their own, referring all things to the will of God ; to them there is no death nor slavery, but to sink down thence, and be engaged in carnal uncertain designs and interests. He that acknowledges God's providence, wisdom and goodness, hath a sufficient amulet against all anxiety, much more against repinings. We may well question our own judgment, when we repine that our souls are secured at

the cost of our bodies: and that is certainly the worst, the unkindest design He hath upon us. Our stripes are not more severe than He sees necessary in order to our good. So that not only religion, but self-love teaches it to be our choice as well as His. He sees to the bottom of us, and what operation those things we desire would have upon us; whilst we, that neither know ourselves nor them, make but random guesses, and worse choices. He is more wise to discern, and more careful to provide what is really good for us, than we ourselves. He considers not what might please, but what may not hurt us; our interest more than our importunity; whilst we might perish by the grant of our desires.

The experience we have had of His care and providence over us, and the folly of our own election, may well bring us to distrust ourselves, and rely upon Him in all our secular affairs. We trust those whom we have cause to think understand things better than ourselves; and rely upon lawyers and physicians,

etc., men in their own faculty, because we account them more competent judges; and may we not much more here? Shall we be prescribing to God, or be displeased if His dispensations do not exactly answer our fancies? Whilst we impatiently complain of our wants, we tacitly, blasphemously, atheistically tax God with want of wisdom, power, or goodness, whereby He should supply us. Can there be anything more formidable than for Him to let us alone; not to meddle any further with our affairs, but comply with our choice, give us up to our own wills and desires, and order all things to happen according to them? To be thus left, every man that loves himself, and understands his own interest, would look upon himself as the most forlorn, abandoned wretch on earth, as one utterly shut out from the greatest blessings that belong to a creature; and if we had any hopes of acceptance, would upon his bended knees resign back himself, and all His concerns into His hands again; beseeching Him above all things not

to throw him from His care and protection, promising never more to repine against Him, but cheerfully to submit to His heavenly will, how severely soever He should think good to deal with Him.

CHAPTER VI.

Encouragement from the Goodness of God.

CONSIDER the love, mercy, and goodness of God. The Divine εὐδοκία,[1] the self-moving propensity and good pleasure of His will, first turned the heart of God, and combined His attributes into a federal association, to work all one way, for the good of believers. All His providences acted upon the stage of the world, are but several manifestations of it, in different dresses and disguises. Instruments of cruelty are not in His habitation. He shaves us with a razor that is hired. Isaiah vii. 20. And, when He causes grief, hath compassion. The

[1] Good-will.

whole creation is a visible monument of His perfections, wisdom, power, and goodness, and a sufficient argument and foundation for our reliance upon Him: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth," Psalm cxxiv. 8. He is good to all, but His mercy is more especially extended to such as are in a state of misery; they are proper and particular subjects of His care, and kindness, and compassion; the fatherless and widows, the prisoners, the poor, and the stranger; He is the helper of the fatherless. Psalm x. 14; cxlv. 14; cxlvi. 9. So that that which among men is usually the chief occasion to take off their affection and kindness, is a principal argument, and frequently made use of by good men, to entitle us to His favour: "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help: I am in misery," Psalm xxii. 11. He pities where others despise; He is concerned where men are careless; He fixes His eye, and opens His ear, where a proud creature hath neither eyes to see nor ear to hear. The

poor are not forgotten by God's love: He respects the meanest artizan equally with the greatest potentate. He slights not the helpless oppressed. That which is a good cause in itself is always so to Him, be it whose it will. Whole mountains of gold fly up in the balance of His hand, against a grain of justice. He judges every man's right. He sees and pities the afflictions of the miserable; He hears the cries of the poor and needy. The sigh of the prisoner, in the deepest vault, sounds in His bowels. He whispers comfort to the doleful moans, deserving pity: "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee," Psalm lxxxiv. 12.

What mean then these scrúples of His kindness; these strugglings under our burden? Why are we so prone to look upon Him with blood-shotten eyes, in the ruin of His creatures, as if He were some austere tyrannical being, apter to affright and terrify, than allure and attract us; and had only sanguinary laws, writ with the blood of His subjects? Why must the smart of the

flesh pervert the judgment of our minds; the feeling of bodily evils destroy all sense of His unchangeable goodness? "What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job ii. 10. Indeed, we shall receive evil whether we will or no; but shall we not kiss the hand, and receive it so, that is, in the same manner, with the same mind, as we receive good; with heart and hand; cheerfully, thankfully, gladly; with much reverence, veneration, and respect to God and His ways of providence towards us? This were an absurd thing once to imagine; a blind man may see this: it is so plain, a fool may understand it. The reason lies all in sight, that we should thus receive evil from the Donor of all our good, the least part of which we have not deserved, but much more than all the evil we suffer, which also is but another method of doing us good; and welcome Him as well when He comes to take as to give; carve contentment out of every dish set before us; cheerfully digest the hardest

fare; bless God full or fasting. Shall we not eat the crust with the crumb?

> Laugh we to lick the sweet, and shall we lour
> If God be pleased to send a little shower?

How great a share may all, who are not wanting to themselves, find they have in the mercies of God, that consider the multitude and magnitude of them? How much are they obliged by them? How little reason have they to murmur against Him? How much to be thankful for them? Due proportion, integrity of parts, perfection of senses, strength of nature, exercise of our faculties, mediocrity of health and appetite, vigour of digestion; mercies in the members of our bodies, in the faculties of our souls, in our neighbourhood, habitations, families, friends, relations, estates, names, and interest in the hearts and prayers of God's people.

What a complex mercy is all this. All our days attended with a careful Providence; we live upon His bountiful allowance, which

makes this world an easy passage to another. The light of the sun, the influences of heaven, the advantages of the elements ; air to breathe in, earth to tread on, fire to warm us, water to cool and cleanse us, clothes to cover us, food to nourish us, sleep to refresh us, houses to shelter us, variety of creatures to feed and delight us. How many lose their life to preserve ours? How many mercies go to the making up one meal's meat? From how many countries doth Providence serve in the provision of our table? What a complex of second causes doth God subordinate, for the producing the coarsest piece of bread, which the poorest man eats: "I will hear, saith the Lord, the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel," Hos. ii. 21, 22. There is not a morsel we eat but is provided in heaven before set upon our table.

Who can reckon up the mercies of one year, of one week, of one day? Good men

thankfully observe them coming in every day by whole loads. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits," Psalm lxviii. 19; and never appear before God, but see themselves encompassed round with them: "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy," Psa. v. 7. How many providences concur in one night's rest and protection? We have a stronger guard about us than Solomon's threescore valiant men about his bed, of the valiant of Israel, though they all hold swords, being expert in war: and every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. Cant. iii. 7, 8. We cannot sufficiently prize that secret mercy that lodges with us, and gives us rest every night. How many burning fevers doth cool sleep extinguish; from how many deaths doth that brother and image of death deliver us? What a mercy is it that we are not nightly scared with dreams, and terrified with visions; that Satan's chain is not let loose upon us: that we sleep in safety, and comfortably behold the morning light; that

sudden palsies do not unloose our nerves, or painful convulsions shrink them up; that we are able to descend our stairs without horror and confusion; that when we are down some messenger of death doth not appal us with terrible tidings, and give us a bitter breakfast; that we have hearts and spirits to call upon the God of our mercies in our families, as an antidote against the evils of the succeeding day; that we find all our household in health, and the rapines of night violence not stripped us naked of all our goods!

When we walk abroad, that we suck not in contagious atoms from the air; that the east wind doth not blast us; that sudden violent rains, in hasty walking, do not cool our sweat into surfeit, or that we hurry not the blood into fermentation, for new and surprising distempers; that the earth we tread on, suddenly opens not its mouth to swallow us up, as it did those rebels in Numbers xvi.; that we wrench not our ankles or other joints upon plain ground; and dash not our foot against a post or stone, to our great

prejudice; that tiles or timber falling from houses, the sweeping of gutters, casual arrows, bullets, stones, fires, rude men, mad irrational creatures, do not dispatch us; an accidental coachman's whip, some great crowd, some unexpected disaster, bring us not to the evening of our lives! How insignificant would be our wariness, did not He watch over us. That lightning doth not lick up our spirits, or a hot thunderbolt rend us asunder; that we can repose our bodies in any grateful posture; that we have a table and appetite; and are not unable to crave a blessing, or to receive it; that we are not, by cares and vexations within, rendered snappish and currish at home and abroad; that every bit doth not choke us, and we are not carried from our table to our pillow, and thence to the chambers of death; that by stopping the channels of nature we perish not; that by letting blood we loose not an artery; or the cutting of a corn doth not rankle to death; that passion or hastiness doth not entangle us, and our words are not

wrested to the losing a friend, or raising an enemy; that our houses do not entomb us in their own rubbish; the fire doth not burn us to ashes; armies of rats or mice do not devour us!

Yea, did we see the admirable frame of this crazy tenement of our soul, and upon what slender golden wires, and nice labyrinths in those wonderful passages, in the clockwork of our bodies, the continuance of our lives depends, we should be astonished at the Divine goodness, and, instead of wondering when any are taken away, stand amazed at our own continuance for one moment; for if either the vessels, or liquors in them, be disturbed, we soon pass away, and are no more: yea, if the inward crasis of the brain be touched, men of the grandest parts, were it not for the constant influx of Divine mercy, would soon shrink into idiots, and prove miserable objects of scorn and pity. We should reckon our mercies not by miles or hours, but by steps and minutes. The very health, ease, peace, and safety of

one day, of one night, of one hour, deserves the thankfulness of many. How many mercies in one meal or meeting! If the evils we suffer call for our prayers, those we are free from call for our thankfulness.

It is as great a mercy to be kept from miseries as to be delivered out of them: to enjoy health as to be recovered from sickness. One relating his great danger by a fall of his horse, saying, he never received such a deliverance. Yes, answered his friend, a hundred times, so often as you have ridden and not fallen. God's privative mercies seem to contend with His positive. We owe no less for what we are not, than for what we are; not dumb, not lame, not blind, not deaf, not decrepit, not distracted, not tormented with gout, stone, ulcers; not filled with blotches, boils, noisome distempers; not scraping ourselves with a potsherd upon the dunghill; not harbourless, friendless, helpless, easeless; not begging our bread from door to door; not in prison, not banished, not in the hands of cruel tyrants and oppres-

sors; and yet, even in such a condition, the Church in captivity finds out a *not* that exceedingly affected her, and makes her bear all with patience: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not," Lam. iii. 22. Mercies for the number, intimating a multitude of favours, in this one act of His forbearance; compassions for the nature of them, which signifies tender affectionate mercy. Our mercies are more and greater than our afflictions: our sufferings may be told, but our mercies are innumerable: we have more left than we have lost.

However it is now, it hath been better with us, and why should to-day's sickness make us forget yesterday's health; this day's hunger unthankful for our former meals; our present scarcity and penury render insignificant, bury all our former ease and plenty? We commit new sins, while we are unthankful either for enjoying His former benefits or escaping the punishment of our former sins, or are negligent of our obedience to those

precepts which require us to preserve an equality of temper in all the changes of our life, lest by repining when we are deprived of some benefits which we formerly enjoyed, we take an unjust occasion to neglect our gratitude for having been happy so long. Nor is it so bad with us as with others; how many better than we would think themselves fine in our cast-off garments; feasted on the reversions of our tables; at ease under our sicknesses, pains, and diseases; even in heaven, if they had but the least part of the remnants of our fortunes!

But, as to spirituals, the worst day in our week is better than the Sabbaths of many of the churches of Christ; the gleanings of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer; which should make us overlook all temporal sufferings, with a holy cheerfulness and triumph. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the

Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it," etc. Isaiah xxx. 19, etc. "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost," 1 Thes. i. 6.

Who can complain of temporal troubles, who considers how he is obliged by spiritual mercies? Our election before the world, redemption from the world, preservation in the world, preparation for a better world; making suit to us that we would love Him; commanding us to do good to ourselves; entreating that duty from us which He might compel; taking it kindly that we give Him of His own; rewarding us for that which by His grace only we can perform; pardoning us when we fall short in our duty; giving us repentance that He may forgive us, and grace that He may receive us into favour.

The liberty, ability, and acceptance of our prayers, the assistance of His Holy Spirit, ministry of His angels, pledges of His endless love, restraining us from sin; His forbearance in the days of our ignorance, unwearied patience, notwithstanding our continued rebellions, earnest entreaties of us when passionately bent upon our own destruction; wholesome counsels, public and private admonitions, the restraints of fear and love; continuing so many undeserved benefits, pursuing us with His merciful kindness notwithstanding our provocations; for those infinite favours, whereby He hath supported our state, enriched our spirits, comforted us in our sorrows, relieved our necessities, blessed us in our places, defended our persons, etc. For what He hath laid up for us in heaven, the very forethought of which is sufficient to support us under all the hardships we can meet with in our passage to it. How many millions of mercies meet together to make up the apostle's one total sum! According as His divine power hath given

us all things that pertain to life and godliness, 2 Pet. i. 3. Who can find out not only the number of particular mercies, but the several kinds and species, the various heads, the general sorts of those mercies that contain multitudes under them? "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds," Psa. lvii. 10; that is, as immense and immeasurable as heaven itself. David's arithmetic failed him, he was forced to leave off numbering when he attempted it, and to say, "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered," Psalm xl. 5.

And now shall we not cheerfully receive an imaginary evil at His hands who sends so much real good? Shall we grumble if He gratify not a particular appetite, when He loads us with His benefits; childishly throw down all, if He gives us not that piece we

would have; murmur under one affliction, and overlook a thousand mercies, when we have forfeited our right to all, and are yet kept in possession of so many; forsake the enjoyment of so many blessings, to pine away in the company of our wants; neither look forward to His future, nor backward to His past benefits? That man's piety was ingenious, who, having one of his eyes put out by falling upon his staff, gave God thanks that his staff was not forked, for so he might by that fall have lost them both. Set we our present sickness and sorrows against our former health and comforts, and impartially compare the mercies we enjoy with the miseries we undergo, and our consolations will be found much more to abound than our sufferings.

Let us therefore be more careful to keep a reckoning of the goods we enjoy, than of what we have lost; and entertain more joy that we had them so long, than sadness we lost them so soon. So shall we make present ill days good, by a thankful remembrance of

good days past, and obtain of Him new matter of thanks; using the world as a feast, soberly, cheerfully feeding on the fare set before us; and when it is taken away, rise and give thanks; and not be such ungrateful guests to the Master of the feast, that hath so liberally treated us, as to reckon all past for nothing, and grudge when He takes away, instead of thanking Him for His good cheer. Shall we make earnest suit to Him when we would borrow, and be offended with Him when we are called upon to pay? He is an ill, ungrateful debtor, from whom the lender cannot ask his own, but shall be like thereby to lose a friend. Let us cast our eye upon what we have and could not be well without, as well as upon what we fain would have but may want: and consider how useful are the things we already have; how ill we could spare them; how much worse we should be than now we are without them; how many want them; how thankful they would be for them; no room then will be found for murmuring. Thankfulness will

insensibly undermine our impatience; it being impossible to be at once thankful and murmuring. Every continuance of His mercies is a new donation; and shall we take no notice of them because they are common? Shall His blessings grow invisible by their being always before us? Shall He lose His thanks by multiplying His favours? Whatsoever we receive is still upon account of new bounty; an alms, not a tribute or reward from Him from whom we receive our being, to whom we owe our very selves, but can claim nothing from Him.

We make some formal acknowledgments; we customarily give thanks at our meals, that we receive all from Him; yet, certainly, he cannot be thought to do that in earnest, that hath all the time of his eating been grumbling that his table abounds not with such delicacies as his neighbour's. God loves a cheerful receiver as well as a cheerful giver. He that hath least, hath enough to oblige not only satisfaction but thankfulness. Though he hath not all he wishes, yet he

hath that which is more valuable than that he complains to want, enough to satisfy an humble modest mind; and which he himself could less spare were he put to his choice. Let him but consider how many undeserved blessings he daily enjoys; and whether those he so impatiently craves after be not much inferior to them; whether he would quit all those he hath for them he wants; and if he would not, then let him judge how unreasonable his repinings are, when himself confesses he hath the better part of worldly happiness, and never any man living had all. The very consideration of the undeserved mercies we have enjoyed should alleviate all our present sufferings. I have made an ill use of Thy mercies, if I have not learned to be content with Thy corrections; and be not so thankful for past favours that the memory of them be able to put away the sense of present miseries. Considering the good I undeservedly enjoy, and the evil I suffer not, but deserve, and others groan under; I will reckon every evil I am free from, so many

new favours, easy corrections among my blessings, and any blessing infinitely obliging; and trust God in all conditions; and rejoice in that trust; and hope even against hope; and be content in the greatest straits, when there is nothing visible that should give contentment. Content to do well, and suffer ill; to be neglected and despised, where we deserve honour and advancement; to be poor without advantages of growing rich; to be sick and afflicted, without hopes of recovering health and felicity in this world; to see our friends wronged, our enemies prosper, our estates decay, and our charges increase.

All things are permitted, acted, or disposed by Him who is wisdom and goodness itself, and so are the result of the most perfect wisdom and goodness (though short-sighted creatures cannot see it); and shall work together for our good, so long as we keep close to our sovereign good, to heal or quicken, try or discover, sanctify or prepare, the fruit of infinite love, and trial of ours. We should lay up in the ark of our memories not only

the pot of manna, the bread of life, but even Aaron's rod, the scourges of correction, which should be so far from abating, that they should quicken and heighten the sense of mercy, and make us look upon them as additional mercies. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me," Ps. cxix. 75. The Lord forgive, saith a martyr, my unthankfulness for persecution. Job (ch. i. 21.) blesses God not only *at* but *after* meat; for all was taken away. And "Thus saith the Lord, So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good," Jer. xxiv. 5.

The paths of mercy are often intricate; God led His people by the right, or a straight, way, saith the Psalmist: but very crooked and winding, according to the stations set down by Moses. The cloudy pillar gives them many a weary turn, to chastise their crooked hearts. Their journey takes them up forty years, which might have been dispatched in

fewer days. Were the world so good as its admirers esteem, St. Peter should not have been in want of it as to say, "Silver and gold have I none," Acts iii. 6; nor would the devil have ever made that offer, "All these things will I give Thee," Matt. iv. 9. Afflictions are federal dispensations; not so much threatened as promised to Christ's seed (Psa. lxxxix. 32; cxix. 75; Heb. xii. 6, etc.), reckoned a special privilege (Psa. xciv. 12; Acts ix. 15, 16; Phil. i. 29), and sanctified, better than removed. There is nothing so beneficial as afflictions, if we do not frustrate their efficacy by the irregular managery of ourselves under them. There is not a trouble we meet with we can be without, but hath its place and work in that frame and design God hath ordained to bring us to glory. It had been far worse with us if they had not befallen us; some positive sadder grief had seized on us; or we should not be capable of enjoying so much happiness in this or the next world. The sufferings of God's servants are but for a very little while (Isa. x. 25);

limited to ten days (Rev. ii. 10); to three days (Hos. vi. 2); to one day (Zech. iii. 9); to a night (Psa. xxx. 5); to an hour (Rev. iii. 10); to a moment (2 Cor. iv. 17); to a small moment (Isa. liv. 7).

Had I been rich, I might have been covetous, prodigal, luxurious; if honourable, proud, tyrannical, ambitious; if in health, soft, effeminate, dainty, sensual. Had He not by some affliction prevented me, or caused me to retreat, I had run too far in the prosecution of secular pleasures or profits; or, He lays it on me, to try the strength and vigour of my mind; to call forth and exercise patience, fortitude, trust, and confidence in Him; my fidelity and loyalty to Him. To make me more circumspect, not only free from notorious faults, but more perfectly virtuous and good; to commend, set off, and sweeten my future good things; to make the relish of them more sweet and pleasant. It is not fit, nor safe, for comforts to go without their attendant affliction.

I will henceforth set no other price on

things than as they relate to my true end and interest. Let me be always under the care and skill, the wholesome discipline, of such a Tutor and Physician, my mind shall keep even pace with Thee; nor shall my will be ever different from my free choice. Answer the necessity of my health, not the importunity of my appetite. Take my soul's part against my enemies; not theirs against my soul. Give me poverty and sickness, rather than not grace to use riches and health. If I want them, Thou requirest not what Thou givest not; if I have them, and want the use, Thy mercy proves my judgment. Let affliction be my portion, so contentment, love to Thee, acquiescence in Thy will, fortitude of mind, and universal amendment, be the use and interest, eternal felicity will then be the issue, event, and purchase.

CHAPTER VII.

Encouragement from the Providence of God.

CONSIDER the providence of God, the continual exercise of His wisdom, power, and goodness, whereby He observes, supports, and governs all creatures, actions, and events, with their particular circumstances, in such a way as is most suitable to their natures: immediately, to their proper ends; remotely, to the order and ornament of the universe; especially, to the good of His elect; ultimately, to His own glory. He makes not the world by His power, and then cares not whether it stand or fall; He employed not infinite wisdom to build a house, and then set chance and folly to dwell in it; He that made it, inhabits and governs it; is as much concerned to preserve as to create. That which was worth making is worthy preserving. He would not employ infinite wisdom and power to create that which He would afterwards disregard. He

cannot but see everything; being everywhere present at hand. It is no diversion, no trouble to Him, to govern and rule all He sees. There is need of Him in all places, and over all things. He is nowhere without an interest or without business. He is owner everywhere, in the possession of what He hath made, and engages Himself in His own possession. He cannot desert His own handy-work. The common Father of all the world must then be concerned in the lives, actions, and affairs of His children.

As God hath given good men power to do miracles to save the world, so He hath done miracles Himself to save them. In Divine and human records are instances not a few, how His providence hath regarded them, interposed for them, marked them for safety (Exod. xii. 7, 13; Ezek. ix. 4; Rev. vii. 3), made a difference between them and others. God had so great a regard for a good man in an evil world, that He took him out of it, unto Himself, by a rare and miraculous translation. (Gen. v. 24.) The windows of

heaven could not drown the world, though very wicked, before Noah had made an ark, though that was a hundred and twenty years in making (Gen. vi. 8. etc.); nor the angel destroy Sodom, until Lot was sent out of the skirts of that destruction. (Gen. xix. 22.) Hence the apostle observes, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations," 2 Peter ii. 9. They are His peculiar people, His particular charge; He makes more account of them than of all the world; He keeps them above all; nay, He keeps all for their sake. He preserved the ark for Noah's sake; Goshen for Israel's sake; all that were in the ship for St. Paul's sake. He supports all kingdoms and states, yea, heaven and earth, for the Church's sake. For He keeps the heavens for the earth, the earth for living creatures, the living creatures for man, man for Israel, Israel for the elect's sake. And, as soon as grace hath finished her work, and the whole number of the elect is accomplished, nature shall utterly cease, and this world give place to a better.

According to the singular decrees of love are His peculiar intentions of care and forecast, help and assistance. Providence is special where love is singular. He holds such a watchful eye of providence over every one of His people, as if He tended him only, yet takes such a special care of all in general as of every one in particular. With a particular providence He watches not only over every particular person, but over every several concern of that person. Their wonderful safety their great enemy owns. He acknowledges a threefold fence about them that hinders him, and all evil, from reaching them or theirs: "Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job i. 10. Dost Thou not protect him, his family, and all that is his, from all manner of evil, by Thy everywhere present providence and almighty power; not leaving the least gap or breach for any annoyance to come in unto him? In all the motions and commotions of the world He forgets not them; still it

shall be well with them; no evil shall come nigh them; nothing shall hurt them; all things shall work good unto them; all is for their good, and He thinks nothing too good for them. Nothing shall befall them without His knowledge of it, and His being concerned for it. He determines the bounds of his habitation (Acts xvii. 26), upholds him, ordereth his steps, delighteth in his way (Ps. xxxvii. 17, 33), suffereth not his soul to famish (Prov. x. 3), preserves his going out and coming in, watches over him, and sets a watch over him, is on his right hand, and round about him (Psalm cxxi. 3, etc., and cxxv. 2). He is with him in the fire, in the water (Isa. xliii. 2), in trouble (Psalm xlvi. 1), in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm xxiii. 4), He covers His people with His feathers, and under His wings (Psalm xci. 4); careth for them, is mindful, tender, careful of them, affectionate towards them, provides for them, defends them, values them as His portion, the lot of His inheritance, His treasure, His jewels, His flock, His servants,

His friends, His children, His spouse, His beloved, the apple of His eye. He is not ashamed to be called their God, and Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren. Here they are all kings in disguise, and never without their life-guard attending them wherever they go. He gives His angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways, Psalm xci. 11, until they have finished their course of service and suffering; and then to bring them to Himself, to their crowns, and to set them upon their thrones. We find (Luke xvi. 22) many angels at this employment, carrying happy, seemingly forlorn, Lazarus into Abraham's bosom; as if they had been ambitious to bear him, every one striving which should carry a limb.

"Take therefore no thought for your lives," Matt. vi. 25, etc. Use all lawful endeavours after them, prudently manage present enjoyments, and leave the rest to God. Undertake all with a quiet mind; resigned to His disposal, without doubtful, fearful, anxious thoughts about future things;

"Saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Which way shall I support my family? How shall I fill these empty bellies? How shall I cover so many naked backs? Will the finger of Providence toil or spin for me? Shall I be fed with a raven's bill? Will the clouds drop down manna unto me? Alas! I find my charges increase, and my estate diminish: large payments and slender incomes; less than a miracle cannot retrieve me, and the time of miracles is now past; I or mine must perish through neglected poverty. Why, be not wanting in thy duty, and He will not be wanting in His providence. Do not forfeit His goodness, bounty, and protection; and He will not fail exercising them towards thee. Expect all your supplies from Him who clothes the lilies of the field; who gives to the sparrow its wings; who feeds the young ravens; who preserveth man and beast; whose tender mercies are all over His works. "Is not the life more excellent, more valuable, than

meat; and the body than raiment?" Will He that granted us a being deny the preservation of it, so long as He hath appointed it; suffer such a stately structure to fall to decay, for want of repair and support; lose that which is of so great a value, for want of food and raiment—so little in comparison of life? It is a greater thing to make than maintain us; to bring us out of nothing than to supply us when we have nothing; to clothe us with flesh and skin than with a garment; to make a mouth than to find meat for it. It is so much more easy to give food than life, and raiment than the body, that He who was so kind, so able to do the one, is not unable, will not be backward, cannot be so cruel to but do the other. He made nothing casual, or to forsake it. His being a Creator obliges Him to be careful of, to provide for His creatures. They are all His pensioners, have their meat at His great ordinary. If He kept it not open, the whole world would instantly feel an universal famine. He is no needy householder, nor

takes more into His family than He hath means to maintain; none in it are neglected by Him; the little ant, the creeping worm, receive their alms at His hand. He never gave life but allowed conveniences for it. He that gives mouths will give meat. He had never made us understand the way of living, but that He intended to bless and succeed our endeavours. His first care in forming us is an argument of His future providence over us.

"Behold the fowls of the air," consider seriously how they are fed; of all creatures they seem to take least care for their food. Many of them spend their whole lives, as it were, in singing, without thought where to get their next meal: you might be as cheerful, and be fed. Were it not better to be without reason than to make use of it only for our vexation; to be incapable of thinking of God, as beasts and fowls are, than to think on Him only to distrust Him and murmur against Him? We feed domestic fowls about the house; but who feeds those that

fly in the firmament, that, making no provision in summer, should in all likelihood starve in the winter, yet are then fattest, and thrive more than those nursed by man's care? They have no repositories, yet never want; no granaries, yet have store. They neither sow nor reap, yet eat and drink, and sleep quietly at night; know not where to feed next, yet go out and find a table furnished for them by their Creator and your heavenly Father. Will He that hath made such plentiful provision for the necessary sustenance, convenience, and defence, relief, delight, and satisfaction of all creatures, neglect His offspring? Shall He satisfy every living thing, and not His own children, who may look upon all creatures as the goods of their Father's house, feeding and providing for them? "Are not ye better," much better, "than they?" Every one of you, than all they? One heir, than all other attendants? One jewel, than all the common vessels of the house? If He eye and regard every sparrow, birds of so little account that one

cannot be valued; there is no money so small but is a price too great for it: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" Luke xii. 6; be confident, He hath a singular care, a far more intimate affection for you, who cost Him so dear. One sparrow is not worth half a farthing; and there is no man shall suffer half a farthing's worth of harm more than He orders. "Not one of them is forgotten before God," much more not any part of you, "but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered;" much more the days of your lives, and the sufferings of those days. If He look to all my hairs, much more to my provision and safety, the members of my body, the great moments of my life and death. If we have security for that of which we keep no account, cut off, and cast away; if every one be not only known to Him, but so kept, as it were by tale, that His enemies cannot pull off one without His permission, but for it He calls them to a reckoning; how much more have we security of our essential parts, and that without which we cannot live?

"Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature," stint, or statute measure of estate? Without Him all our thoughtfulness is as vain as if a dwarf should thereby think to acquire a tall man's stature. The most griping worldling puts not up one penny without a ticket signed by His hand, to fetch it out of His public exchequer whose is the earth and the fulness thereof. If He shut up that, all creatures break and become bankrupts. Turmoiling musings are additions to our fears; nay further, often hinder our desires. He may justly curse our present, who distrust Him for future, mercies, and will not be satisfied with the fidelity of His providence. All the joys in this world cannot take one grey hair out of our heads; but there needs only disturbance of mind to make us hoary before our time. Bion, seeing a prince weeping and tearing his hair for sorrow, asked him, If baldness would cure his grief? "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked," Psalm xxxvii. 16, because that little is God's allowance.

"And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." Without the gardener's care and industry; they neither do the work of the man, in toiling without, nor of the woman, in spinning within doors; contribute nothing to their beautiful clothing. "And yet, I say unto you, that even Solomon," the wisest, richest of princes, in all his glory and magnificence, "was not arrayed like one of these." The natural bravery of the lily, coming from its own fruitful roots, is as a beautiful to a painted face, beyond all the glory of apparel that art and cost could bring unto it. All the lilies of the field are so decked and clothed as is not on one Solomon in all his glory. He puts more glory every day on one flower, than skill and wealth can on the greatest monarch, in his greatest splendour. His providential goodness, extended to the flowers of the field, is beyond all that man can do, by the utmost extent of his wisdom, power, and riches.

Wherefore, if God so curiously clothe, not

only the delightful flowers of the garden, but grass of the field we tread on, of so little account, so short continuance, which to-day is, and to-morrow cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, of a more excellent rank and order, frame and structure, appointment and end; your lives, more valuable; your bodies, more wonderful; your souls, more durable; your work, more excellent; your final estate, more considerable, than theirs? Will He that so plentifully feeds the sparrows, that have no granaries; so gorgeously clothes the lilies, that have no distaff; make so rich, so glorious provision for such short-lived creatures, starve those, that rationally serve, that shall eternally enjoy Him? His providence regards the lowest part of the creation; fowls and lilies, as well as the conduct of states and empires. He remembered not only Noah, but every living thing, and all the cattle, that was with him in the ark (Gen. viii. 1). He giveth to the beast (Psalm cxlvii. 9). He provideth for the raven his

food, when his young ones cry unto God (Job xxxviii. 41). The young lions seek, and find, their meat from God. The several kingdoms of the world are Thy little families, most bountiful Creator, and Thou comprehendest in Thy fatherly care all things which Thou hast made. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, that Thou mightest give them their meat in due season. What Thou givest them, they gather; Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest the desires of every living thing," Psalm civ. 21, 27, 28; cxlv. 15. Now, for us, who have such express promises added to such instances of His providence, who takes more care for us than for other creatures, to doubt of sufficiency, if not riches, argues infidelity and diffidence in Him to admiration: "O ye of little faith!"

The fear of want is for want of obeying His command: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow." Be not anxiously solicitous for future necessaries, saying, "What shall we eat, or what we drink?" etc. It is your shame to imitate those you abhor as infidels,

and not to differ in practice, as you do in profession, from them. "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," as if themselves, not God, were to provide for them. This studious, earnest, busy inquiry, is more beseeming heathens, who have no lively apprehension of God, of His providence, fatherly care and love, than you, who acknowledge and experience them. It is for poor orphans to cark and care, to shift as well as they can for themselves; but with you the case is quite otherwise. "For your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these necessary things," what He first gave, and are still needful for you: that life and the body cannot subsist without food and raiment. It is enough for a father that he knows his children's wants, and his reproach to neglect them. He will be sure to supply those wants which are of his own making. You may as well question whether He knows, as whether He will supply. He made us so needy, not because He was so niggardly, but bountiful; not because He was not good, but would be

always so to us; not that we should be poor, and want these things, but humble, and always go to Him and have them; not to make us miserable, but that we should still remember Him, crave and expect supplies from Him, depend upon Him, and not be able to live without Him. We cannot put upon Him a greater wrong than the alienation of our trust, which He challenges as His peculiar; if placed on any creature, we deify it; we take upon us what is proper to Him; and it is no less a fault and folly to invade God's part than to neglect our own. O let my care be to depend on Thee, as Thine is to provide for me, and I cannot want.

"But seek ye first," before and above all, "the kingdom of God," as the end, "and His righteousness," as the way, "and all necessaries" in it, and to it, "shall be added unto you." Let your principal care be to approve yourselves My obedient, dependent children, and you are secured of maintenance in your minority, as well as of your inheritance when you come to age. There

is bread as well as grace, and clothing as well as righteousness, in the promise: Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8; as certain concerning food and raiment, as remission of sins and eternal life. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," Psalm xxxvii. 3. If He give grace and glory, "He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly," Psa. lxxxiv. 11. Be our heart honest, our hand diligent, our desires moderate, our souls believing, and we shall not fail of a supply of the needs of our bodies, which is the just measure of our wants. Take upon you the care of duty, and leave all others to Him. Such as discard themselves from His family have little reason to expect the provisions of it. But He will surely mind our good, if we faithfully discharge our duty. We shall find Him answering us in what we look for from Him, in doing what He expects from us. Can we have so mean thoughts of Him

as to think we should intend His glory, and He not much more intend our good: that He should neglect us, doing the things that are pleasing in His sight? It is distrust in Him, to be troubled for what is future; impatience against Him, to be troubled for what is past, or present. This temper of spirit disbelieves His wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness, which are all engaged for our provision and security in His way.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Rest satisfied with your present allowance, and be not solicitous for the future, or fearful of evils when you feel none. Impossibles concern not our desires, nor unavoidables our fears, nor things past remedy our vexing sorrow. Desire not what thou canst not attain, nor fear what thou canst not prevent. Use the remembrance of past things as instructive experiences, not renewers of thy torment. Nothing we can suffer from without, is worth one

minute's disquiet of so noble a thing as the soul, which then comes nearest its original, the nearer it comes to immutability. Reliance on God saves us from much sin and misery; whilst distrustful thoughts devour our peace, and leave us nothing in the room but fear, grief, and discontent. All solicitous looking beyond the present takes off so much from our present content. Imaginary evils operate as if real, and produce substantial griefs. Ignorance of future miseries is a privilege, when knowledge is ineffectual to prevent them. That Providence which brings in the day shall also bring new events to comfort us under all the evils of it. Let not the *present* have the charge and burden of the *future* also. Make your troubles as few, as small, as short as may be; every day's incumbrance is pain enough for all our patience, care enough for all our prudence, labour enough for all our diligence; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Why then by impatience and distrustful

forethoughts, fruitless griefs for past, present, and projected future evils, do we anticipate, increase, and lengthen them; living in misery now, for fear we should hereafter; spending the night, allowed for rest, with irksome apprehensions of the next day's task, worse than the task and burden itself? Why are we so cruel to ourselves, so ungrateful to God, that every suggestion of a possible danger or miscarriage shall rob Him and ourselves too; shall create more trouble than all our present comforts, peace, and thankfulness; a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, darken the whole face of heaven itself, hinder the light of reason, the prospect of faith, the sight of God and all His mercies? While we live at such a rate, where is our reason quietly to enjoy the present good, while we disquiet ourselves about those evils that are not, or may never be, or turn to our great advantage? Where is that faith that should support us under the very greatest pressures, while we distrust God, in our present ease and plenty? Where is our joy

and thankfulness to Him, for all His favours through our whole lives, while our impatient hopes, the groundless fears, and jealousies of our own fancies, extinguish the sense of His goodness, and make us as unworthy to Him as burthensome to ourselves?

We can no way more honour God, or ease ourselves, than by committing all our affairs unto Him; and minding our duty, without troubling our thoughts about events. How easy then, how comfortable would our lives be! So lives the child in his father's house; so sleeps the infant in its mother's arms; so live the saints and angels of God; this is the life that is lived in heaven; without care or fear, without distrust, perplexity, or anxiety, under this assurance: that God will be the same to all eternity which He is at present to them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Encouragement by considering God as our Father.

A YOUNG man, being at sea in a dreadful storm, when all the passengers were at their wits' end, he only was cheerful; being asked the reason of his mirth, he answered, that the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew that his father would have a care of him. Though the ship of the Church and State be in a sinking condition, look we to our station, our pilot, God and our Father, will have a care of us and it. While we consider in whose hands the government of the world is, though heaven and earth come together, a gracious heart and solid quiet will not, cannot, be far asunder. He hath a greater venture of glory in the Church's welfare than men can have; and is fighting for, while He seems to fight against His people: answering their prayers, whilst He seems to reject them. However it goes with the world, with the

wicked, it shall be well with the righteous, Isa. iii. 10. He puts a difference, in public calamities, between them that serve Him and them that serve Him not. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Mal. iii. 17. In a raging fire, in devouring overflowing calamity, property* alone is a ground of care; a man would willingly save and secure that which is his own, and of any use unto him. But, if you add unto this, Preciousness, that increases the care.

But, of all jewels, those which come out of our hearts are more precious than those which adorn us. Relationship works not only upon the affection, but hearts (Jer. xxxi. 20). And as jewels add an excellency to the word mine, so doth service to the word son. A man hath much conflict in himself to take off his heart from an "undutiful son" (2 Sam. xviii. 5, 29, 33). But, if any child be more a jewel than another, certainly it is a dutiful child;

* Whatever is our own.

he hath a special interest in his father's eye and ear, hand, heart, and inheritance; not only by nature, but obedience. Propriety, they are mine; preciousness, they are jewels, treasures, ornaments unto me; relation, they are sons; usefulness, they are sons that serve me: all sufficient grounds of care and protection in the midst of danger. So that, wheresoever we are, we have nothing to do but to believe, obey, and rejoice, that we are in the hands of a Father; in better hands we cannot be; His charge, to whose care we have left ourselves, and the ordering of all our concerns; who stands intrusted with us; who is always faithful to those He takes into His care; who hath stigmatized careless improvident persons with the name of worse than infidels (1 Tim. v. 8), and implanted in every creature, not only principles of self-preservation, but natural affections, even in those of a natural devouring fierceness, towards their offspring; so that no man, wolf, lion, ever hated his own flesh, but loved it, and cherished it.

And will God suffer Himself to be outdone by the kindness, bounty, and compassion of His own creatures? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15. The provident care of my heavenly Father forbids the care of distrust in Him, and requires the care of diligence in myself, to interest my judgment in the choice and use of means, but to keep my affections disinterested, unconcerned in the event; to serve, but not to misdoubt *His* providence, while I employ *my* own. That which is not within my power should be out of my care. An obedient child concerns not himself how he should have another suit of clothes, or to-morrow's meals' meat: he eats that meat, wears those clothes, is satisfied with that lodging and provision, his father provides for him. But how can I call Him Father, and prefer my low and sordid cares before His providence, as if He were such a father as took no care for His children? Solicit-

ousness about the issue of my lawful endeavours dishonours Him, as if He would not, could not, knew not how to help me. My soul, disclaim God for thy father, or rest contented with and confident of His fatherly care and kindness, provision and protection. To whom shall I run in my extremity: of whom shall I crave pardon and provision, succour and relief; but of my Father, that ocean of goodness, which hath overflowed the whole creation, who attires and decks the flowers of the field, neglects not any thing, provides for every thing He hath made, spreads a table in the wilderness for the beasts and birds of prey, keeps open house for all His creatures? But His faithful household servants are more especially under His eye, His care, His providence; shall have them given meat in due season. Nor matters it which way; whether flesh be brought in a raven's bill, or an angel bake our bread with juniper coals, or our own industry, or an unexpected friend, or a customer from far, help us with it. Whatsoever hand pre-

sents our mercies, or whatsoever heart was inclined to hand it, all flows from the grand original. Every mercy is the product of divine love, though second causes intervene; for those very causes have their creation, motion, direction, and success from Him He that turns the hearts of kings as the rivers of waters, turns also all the little rivulets in the world into what scorched parched ground He pleases.

Sacred story derives from heaven the kindness of Abimelech to Abraham, of Laban and Esau to Jacob, of Ruth to Naomi, of Boaz to Ruth, of Jonathan to David, etc. When others show kindness to us, let us consider the motions of hearts are sometimes infused, but also always conducted by Him. It may be of good use what Hobson, the late noted carrier of Cambridge, said to a young student, receiving a letter of the sad tidings of his uncle's death (who maintained him at the university), weeping bitterly, and reciting the cause of his grief; he replied, Who gave you that friend? Which saying was no

small refreshment, support, and comfort to him then, and afterwards in his ministry. So, Mr. Carter greatly comforted one, who making his moan to him, that he had lost the greatest friend he had in the world, having in a manner all his livelihood by him, by saying, When the fountain is dried up in one place, God will open it in another.

Mr. Dod, intending to marry, was full of fear and care how he should be able to live, his income being so small as only maintained him in his single state: looking out at a window, and seeing a hen scraping for her numerous brood about her, thought thus with himself: This hen but lived before she had these chickens, and she doth so now, with all these. I see the fowls neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet my Father feedeth them. He that feeds the ravens will not starve the herons, said Mr. Heiron, on his death-bed, to his distressed wife, for her many children. And Luther, leaving the world: Lord, saith he, here are Thy children. Thou lentest them me, and

I resign them back again to Thee. While I looked upon them as mine, I endeavoured to provide for them; Thy compassions are infinitely above what mine are. It is vile ingratitude to despise a present of God's preparing and sending, so curious a piece of His workmanship; to rejoice when our cattle multiply, and to murmur when our children increase. It is heathenish distrustfulness to fear, that He that hath provided children for us will not provide necessaries for them. God often provides better for the poor child than for the repining parent. The sinfully solicitous Israelites, who in the wilderness concluded they and their children should be starved for want of food, were themselves destroyed for want of faith; their children, meanwhile, being reserved for a land flowing with milk and honey.

If in my Father's house be bread enough, and to spare, for hired servants, much more for His sons; who did not forget to be a Father when they had forgotten to be children, but gave His own Son to die, that His

adopted sons, who were children of the devil, should live. And how is it possible He should not complete that gift, by bestowing all other things that are profitable for us; and either present pressures, or deliverances from them, as He sees them most for our real advantage: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. We have no cause to fear that God will not give us whatsoever is profitable for us, seeing He hath not spared His own Son to save us. We may well be confident in His fatherly love and compassion towards us, as His children, who in Christ is become our Father, and gives us both the privilege, John i. 12, and spirit of sons, Gal. iv. 6; whose love towards us is so much greater than that of earthly parents towards their children, as His goodness and mercy are greater. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give

good things to them that ask Him?" Matt. vii. 11.

Our very mould and frailty He makes a sufficient argument to compassionate and relieve us: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust," Ps. ciii. 13, 14. He is our Father when He strikes, corrects, seems to frown upon us, to carry it as our enemy. He is too wise to manifest His love by outward tokens of distinction; or to give that son He loves best a gayer coat than the rest of His children. He will do nothing but what he should, said a wise son, when told that his father would disinherit him. My Father is greater, wiser, better than I; He is supreme over me; hath the whole disposal of me; is tender and careful of me; full of love, pity, and compassion towards me; knows better than I what is best for me; and will make convenient provision for me. He is often more merciful to me, in denying me what I ask, than He could be

in granting. What father can see his child want food, when he hath it by him, unless he give him physic, and then he must be kept to a spare diet! I will trust His wisdom, because He is God; and His love, because He is my Father: so, I cannot doubt but that anything which He sends deserves my thanks, though I see not wherein the benefit of it lies.

A cup of wormwood would not be reached to me by so wise, so good a Father, but that His love and my benefit are mingled with it; coming from the fountain of love and goodness, it hath a blessing in it, though I cannot at present taste or apprehend it. Though our Saviour knew His cruel murderers' design was not to execute His Father's will, but their own malice, He falls not foul upon them; He overlooks the cupbearer, to look upon him that sent it. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" John xviii. 11. What cup can be bitter which His wisdom provides, His goodness sends and consecrates to us, who hath the

same bowels of mercy, love, and goodness to us in His corrections as in His favours? He tempers our grief to our strength, not to our desert; measures out the kind, weight, and continuance of our afflictions. They are appointed, sent under the conduct, and never exceed the line and limits of His power, wisdom, and goodness, who is the mighty Sovereign and Governor of the world, the great Creator, the constant Observer, wise Disposer, uncontrollable Over-ruler of all things; who hath absolute power to do whatsoever He pleases; is infinitely just, and will do what is righteous; infinitely wise, and knows what is best to be done; infinitely good in Himself, and gracious to all that depend upon and submit to Him; that nothing shall befal them but what shall turn to their present and everlasting good, making them best at last; turning poison into a remedy; cross and contrary events co-operating for our real advantage.

Resignation of our concerns to Him lays all querulous thoughts, hushes all the whim-

perings of our minds in the hour of trouble. We never carve well for ourselves, when we snuff at the portion cut out to us by the hand of our heavenly Father. He that gave us so great a blessing as sonship, when we were enemies, will much more give us so comparatively small a blessing as food, now we are His sons. Shall not He who saved our souls from death, deliver our bodies from the dangers of this world? His dealings with us are all love, mercy, and faithfulness. He gives all His children so much as He sees sufficient for them; in an especial manner His grace to fear Him, contented spirits to submit to Him, believing hearts to depend upon Him, His blessing with all their enjoyments. He will preserve us from evil, or the evil of it; proportion, bless it to us; comfort, support us under it, and deliver us out of it. By Him I am infallibly assured to be preserved or relieved; freed or rescued from, or secured under, afflictions. I shall receive deliverance from them, or enjoy under them satisfaction and tranquillity of mind, patience,

and contentedness with His good pleasure, submission and resignation of my will to His, support and comfort under my weaknesses and despondencies; such evidences, communications, irradiations of His love and favour, care, and kindness to me, as shall not only recompense the want and loss of any outward comforts, but sweeten the presence of any outward troubles; make them comparatively inconsiderable unto me, not to be parted with on any terms.

When Julius Cæsar was at any time sad, upon the thoughts of any disaster that befel him, he was wont to say, *cogitate esse Cæsarem* Think that thou art Cæsar; and that put him into a more cheerful temper. We could not be dismayed did we not forget ourselves. "Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? Wilt thou not tell me?" 2 Sam. xiii. 4. Nothing can add to or detract from an infinite good and happiness. Is not He better to us than houses or lands, friends, riches, or honours? He hath all things, that hath Him who hath all things.

When Christ is given, a right to all is given. No matter for many things, so I have the one thing needful; to whom Thou givest honour, so I have a portion of Thy grace; in what place I am, so I discharge the duty of it. Who can complain of neglect, whom the King Himself embraces and delights to honour; of sickness, whose sins are forgiven; of want, who hath an interest in the promises; of poverty, who hath an inheritance in heaven; of dishonour, who is the son of God, who wants neither wisdom to direct, nor interest to oblige Him to do what is best for His child? General invitations and common mercies are for us as men; but where Thou givest grace Thou comest close unto our souls; and winnest us with dear and particular intimations. If we are Thy children, we are richer than the world can make us, which the worst may have and best want. Thou sufferest infidelity to reign, to instruct Thy disciples; and abandonest the fairest part of the world to them that persecute Thee. There can be no poverty where we have

Thee for an inheritance; he whom Thou sufficest not, deserves to be perpetually poor. Give me but grace to serve and rely upon Thee, and I ask no more. Shall I say that is too little which infinite love and wisdom thinks enough; or disorderly hasten towards enlargement, instead of patiently waiting the Lord's leisure? Should He spread before me all this world's treasure, and bid me take what I would, could I do more wisely than put the choice to Him again, and beseech Him to choose for me, who loves me better, and knows better what is best for me than myself? And shall I not now then thankfully stand to His choice? We will henceforth be cheerful and contented in our present allotment. If everything be best which He appoints, why am I troubled as if things went not well with me? It is impossible it should have been better with me than it is; it had not been well if it had been otherwise. All things are ordered by His deliberate counsel and foreknowledge, who grasps all my concerns, consults my universal good, is

as exactly careful of me as if He had none other to look after; and suffers no trouble to befal me because He doth not regard, for His care and providence extend to every creature; or because He cannot or will not help, for He is equally infinite in all His attributes; but because His wisdom finds that condition fittest for me. Had I more of the world, I might have less grace. Though my commons be short, it should certainly be otherwise if He saw it better. If I have not what I desire, I have what I ought to desire.

Querulous wranglings, sullen discontents, disturb not my satisfaction and repose. I will desire and will, just so, and no otherwise than Thou doest, O omniscient, omnipresent, only wise God and merciful Father, whose goodness designs my welfare, and whose wisdom manages that design. I would rather have that be, which already is, than anything else. That is better which Thou willest than I. Thou consultest well and wisely about it; knowest what use to

make of Thy creatures; where most fit to bestow them; and wilt dispose of me there where most necessary and best for me; and suffer no evil to befall me, unless for some greater good. I venture all with Thee, I freely refer all to Thee, in the particular disposition of myself and mine. Grant me not what I crave, but what Thou knowest good to give me. Take from my punishment, or add to my patience. Lessen my burden, or strengthen my shoulders. All bestness depends upon the wisest goodness. I will refuse nothing which seems good unto Thee; and more willingly consent to that Thou wouldest have than to my own inclination. Put me into what condition, use me as, lead me whither, Thou pleasest. Choose my raiment and provision for me; sickness or health, respect or disgrace, plenty or poverty; I will not only consent and submit unto, but make it my business to vindicate, apologize, and maintain these Thy dealings with me to be most fit and prudent, most suitable and advantageous to me.

CHAPTER IX.

Regulating our Desires and Opinions.

So uneasy and unquiet a thing is man, not raised above this inconstant state, that he suffers as many servitudes as the world has changes. Every alteration abroad makes another at home; a tide of swelling or sinking affections within, at every ebb or flow of things without. His mind is in such perpetual agitation, till escaped out of the whirl and circuit of the allurements and affrightments of this world, that he finds no peaceable corner in it. Whilst he that lives above it, looks down upon it in all its glory with triumph and contempt, and with the foot of scorn spurns it into inconsiderableness; stands upright in the midst of ruins, endures torments with greater courage than persecutors threaten or execute them; loses all earthly enjoyments with more cheerfulness than others enjoy them; neither desires nor fears changes; is the

same whatsoever happens in his fortunes or affairs; his mind and estates are matches, hath learned to bear all injuries, disappointments, and difficulties, with an equal mind. He who hath shut up his desire is in truth a happy man. He is wise enough, who knows himself; great enough, who masters himself; rich enough, who enjoys himself; hath pleasure enough, who pleases himself; happy enough, who lives well.

It is almost impossible he should be oppressed with sorrow who serves God for God's sake. Christianity, teaching us to be content in all estates, teaches us to be happy; for nothing from without can make us miserable, unless we join to it our own consent, and apprehend it such, and entertain it in our sad and melancholy retirements, and comply not with all the issues of divine Providence. Impatience makes every ague a fever; and every fever a calenture, or sun fever, and that calenture may expire in madness. But a quiet spirit is a great disposition to health; and for the present

alleviates, if not removes, the sickness. He that hath learned to terminate his desires when his needs are served, and to judge of his needs by the proportion of nature, hath nothing wanting towards riches: he only wants that is not satisfied. Joseph and Mary, we may easily suppose, as poor as hunger, as forsaken as banishment, as disconsolate as strangers; yet their present lot gave them no affliction, because fed with a necessary hospitality, and their desires were no larger than their tables; their eyes looked only upwards, and they were careless for the future and careful of their duty; and so made their lives pleasant by the measures and discourses of divine philosophy.

Things below have nothing of certainty but the miseries that attend them. The toil and labour we undergo to attain them; the fear of losing them after such troublesome acquisition; the care we employ to secure them; the grief or resentment we feel, when they are taken from us; are not so much the evidences of our wants as of their own

malignity. And it is not easy to resolve, whether poverty, with its incommodities, be more supportable than abundance, with all its insuperable torments. A Christian is a king in this world, without the load of a sceptre or diadem. To him poverty is not insupportable, but it is to them that think it so. The imagination makes the greatest part of the torment. Men must be ignorant of necessitous contentments to be afraid of their condition. If we frequent their habitations, we should see there is nothing dreadful in them but the name they bear; that joy covers the faces of most of their guests; that they dispute tranquillity of mind with the rich; and that, without being laden with the cares that disturb the wealthy, they taste life's sweetness with delight; and, if they be forced to transplant, they leave their cottages without complaint. The very place others call banishment, is the country of the inhabitants; they seek to get out, and not to carry away; and assure themselves to find everywhere sufficient to satisfy their needs:

while the rich are unhappy in the midst of plenty and pleasures. Calamities beset them on all sides; their treasures are their troubles; they get them with labour, possess them with fear, and lose them with sorrow. Seneca esteemed himself happy in his exile; the penury that attended him contributed to his quiet; he thought he had lost his trouble, not his goods, when they spoiled him of his wealth; and that, by a happy mischief, he had recovered his liberty in being deprived of the care of preserving his riches.

He hath most not that strives to add to his estate or reputation, but to subtract from his desires. It is more eligible to be without them than to need them. He is the greatest monarch that hath little and is satisfied; not he who thinks he hath not what he should have, what others have, what he might have, or who grieves there is no more to have. He that is always craving is never contented. If we would spare to desire, we might spare to have. There are few men so miserable who may not find satisfaction in themselves

and their condition, because it is in every man's power to terminate his desires; whilst, by their disorders, we are induced to value more a future trouble or evil than a present repose or good. He is not happy who hath all he desires, but who desires not what he hath not. Were there no other world, I would not be greedy after the great things of this, when it is far more easy to be without them. Here would I indulge myself the sensuality of a contented mind; the luxury of an *ataraxia*, that is, of an indifferency as to all these things; of being quiet and untroubled by not having them; free from the hurry and disorder of them. He that hath once a competency hath all the contentment that is to be found in temporal things; and experience will tell him, after sufficiency once attained, contentment will increase no more, though riches increase never so much. He can have no enemy who will be a friend to all. Nothing is able to cross him who is disposed to take everything well.

Nothing is enough to satisfy lust, a little

to satisfy nature; all the rest is but matter of opinion. We pick our own sorrows out of others' joys; comparison, more than reality, makes us happy or miserable. Many never found themselves in want till they discovered the abundance of others; and could have liked their own portion well enough, had they not seen another have something they liked better. They hunger, not because they are empty, but because others are full. Nay, the most inconsiderable thing acquires a value by being another's; whilst we despise much greater, being our own. Not necessity, but ambition and superfluity, set men's hearts upon the rack. Had I all the world, I could enjoy no more than to clothe and feed me; the rest could please me no otherwise than by looking on; and I can thus solace myself while it is another's; with the same mind, behold their riches and my own poverty; and make as great a benefit of that, as they of their increase: whilst I am free from those black phantasms of cares and fears, which leap on down pillows, and pass

through splendid palaces, to find out those pompous lives which have usually but the bark of happiness.

They that seem to live so happy, do not seem so to themselves; but, by times and turns, have their griefs and discontents. Besides, those which are most happy are most sensible, and, unless all things fall out to their liking, impatient of all adversity. Every little cross overthrows them; so small are the occasions which take from the most fortunate the height of their happiness. We find not miseries so uneasy as we make them; while we not only endure the whole affliction that troubles, but increase it by repining at the envied condition of others; fancying we are more unhappy than we should be were we allowed to exchange that which troubles us for anything which doth not.

Many of those we envy, as thinking them far less sufferers than ourselves, look with envious eyes on us, and do but dissemble their grievances more handsomely than we

do, not find them more easy than ours, but everyone is as miserable or happy as he esteems himself. If we have not what we would, it is but at worst being contented in what we have; a sure means of discharging that anxiety of mind in respect of our condition, or other men's. If I possess not so great an estate as many do, some of them, perhaps, notwithstanding their abundance, enjoy less than I; as well as there are more who have not so much of either. We would willingly exchange fortunes with many, but perhaps not be any of those men on any account. There is something in every estate, which without experience is not known, and being experienced doth molest and trouble. We judge of our own discontents, but know not how far they are exceeded in the same kind in others. Were every man's troubles publicly known, few but would bear their own burdens rather than other men's. Would we look with as much compassion on the adversities of our brethren as we do with envy on their prosperities, we should

find cause to sit down contentedly with our own burden and comforts, seeing that we bear but the proportionable share of our common nature; except some extraordinary demerit of our own hath added to the weight; and, in that case, we have more reason to admire our sufferings are so few than so many.

There is nothing more disingenuous, more diabolical, than to think ourselves more miserable because another is happy; to create wants from the envious contemplation of other men's abundance; that cannot first be satisfied with an inferior degree of happiness; and then whet our impatience with other men's enjoyments of what we cannot obtain. Whereas, we should make the comforts of others an allay, not an improvement, of our own miseries. True charity attracts the concerns of our brethren to ourselves; and he that hath that in his breast can never want refreshment whilst any about him are happy; for, by adopting their interests, he shares in their joys. As

our present content is in the power of our resolutions, so we have as much command of the future. And it is but supposing the worst that we apprehend, or can happen to us, already come to pass. He easily bears adverse fortunes who always expects them. Foresee the worst accident, and all things will fall out prosperously. He that thus prepares himself needs not fear his tranquillity of mind, since he resolves to give it himself.

That which troubles or gives us rest, is in ourselves. If we be not quiet there, everything without will make us miserable; if we be, nothing can. If we be sick, and are afraid to die; in pain, and have no patience; scorned, and are proud; impoverished, and are covetous; nothing can help us from being unhappy. But, if we fear not death so much as an ill life; think impatience and murmuring a worse disease than the gout or stone; pride, the highest disgrace; covetousness, the basest beggary, the greatest poverty; if we die not unwillingly, when we must die

sooner than we would; lose not our patience with our health; nor our constancy and cheerfulness with our estate; be not our own enemy, when we have no friend: vex not ourselves, when others trouble us; be not solicitous for to-morrow too, if we be ill to-day: we can feel no harm by death or sickness, by scorn or want.

Keep all well within, that no disorder put that out of order, and we are well. No man can make another a slave, that hath not first enslaved himself. Be not enthralled to honour or disgrace, pleasure or pain, hope or fear, life or death, and thou art free. Nothing can overcome him that is not first overcome by his own imaginations and passions, false opinions, unreasonable desires, fond affections, ungrounded expectations. A proud man hath no God; an unpeaceable man hath no neighbour; a distrustful man hath no friend; but a discontented man hath not himself. Those burdens that break a froward man's back will not so much as break a silent man's sleep.

"At whatsoe'er shall happen be not sad;
Alike for all that God dispenseth, glad:
Wise Periander did through grief expire,
Because events not joined with his desire."

The best way to be rich is not to increase possessions, but to lessen desires. So, the contented man must needs be abundantly provided for, being so entirely satisfied with what he hath as to have no desires at all. Whosoever would have this rare jewel of contentment, which turns want into wealth, all into gold, must come as they who seek the philosopher's stone, with minds divested of all ambitious covetous desires, else they shall never find it. None are less contented than the rich, which shows our repinings proceed not from any defect of bounty in God, but from the malignant temper of our own hearts. He is likeliest to find contentment, who sits at home and duly contemplates those blessings God hath brought within his own reach; of which every man that considers well will find he hath a fair proportion, and think himself blessed with what he hath, without being careful for what

he hath not. While he that measures his poverty by his wants, so much he wanteth as he doth desire. If we set not bounds to our desires, we shall never be satisfied. If we modestly confine them within the limits God hath set us, to the things we need, and He hath promised—and what pretence have we to claim more than our charter gives us; the covenant indenture goes no further than food and raiment (Matt. vi. 25, etc.)—every new accession He superadds will appear, what it really is, a largess and bounty. Glory itself, without us, will not make us happy in heaven. It can never be well with us till our own souls be a heaven to us; and blessedness be a domestic, an home-dwelling inhabitant there; till we have got a right temper of mind, a settled principle of quietude in our own breast, and become the sons of peace, with whom the peace of God may find entertainment and abode; till we have that treasure within us that may render us insensible of any dependence on any foreign good or fear of foreign evil.

When Archelaus invited Socrates to his court, for his relief and advancement, the philosopher dismissed the messenger with this heroic answer: Tell the king, that a measure of flour may be bought in Athens for a halfpenny, and water is to be had for nothing; and though your master supposes I want, yet I have enough, because I am content with a little. Marcus Curio, when he had bribes sent him, to tempt him to be unfaithful to his country, was sitting at dinner with a dish of turnips; Well, saith he to them, that man that can be content with such fare as I have will not be tempted with your rewards: I thank God, I am content with this fare; and as for rewards, let them be offered to those that cannot be content, as I, with a dish of turnips. He that can be satisfied with a hard bed and a bare board is shot-free from a thousand temptations that prevail on others, to the disturbing, to the damning of their souls.

Zeno, once very rich, hearing all his goods were cast away in a shipwreck, Fortune,

saith he, speaking in a heathen dialect, hath dealt well with me, and would have me now study philosophy. Socrates, when the state was oppressed with a thousand miseries, always went abroad and came home with the same look; bearing a mind smooth and serene on all occasions; far remote from grief, and above all fear. When the city was besieged, and every one lamented his condition, he was no more moved than when it was flourishing; nothing ruffled or discomposed the even happy frame of his soul. He sought not anxiously how to acquire more means, but to accommodate himself to what he had; wherewith he was so contented, that he affirmed himself to come nearest the gods, because he wanted least. One saying, it was a great matter to abstain from what a man desires; but, It is a greater, answered he, not to desire at all. And added,

> Care, if by care aught may effected be;
> If not, why carest thou, when God cares for thee?

Thrasea, the martyr under Nero, was a

person of that divine presence and discourse, that his friends were confident, if they could have persuaded him to stoop so far from the contempt of death as to plead for his life, and make his defence, that he would have thunderstruck the senate, and Nero himself, who had no other cause of displeasure against him, but his going out of the senate, as refusing to give his vote for the condemnation of Agrippina, upon the barbarous motion of her unnatural son, and his not appearing at the funeral solemnities, wherein divine honours were conferred upon Poppea. Through his belief of the soul's immortality, of which he was discoursing with Demetrius, the philosopher, at that instant, he was of so well a composed mind that he did not so much as change countenance, except to a more cheerful aspect, at the news of his condemnation. And while his life was breathing out at the veins of both his arms, he spent not his breath in effeminate lamentations, but in discourses upon that endless life, to which he assured himself he was

hastening; and calling the quæstor who was sent to see his execution: Look here, saith he, young man, we are pouring out this offering (*Jovi liberatori*) to God Redeemer. I pray God divert the omen; but verily thou livest in such times, as it is very behoveful to get thy mind fortified against all temporal evils, by such examples of constancy as thou seest me set before thee. Anaxarchus the philosopher, having sharply reproved Nicoerean, and being by him ordered to be beaten to death with iron mallets, Strike on, strike on, saith he; thou mayest break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but Anaxarchus himself thou canst not touch. Reproach not religion by yielding the day to pagan morality.

Let not the faith of Christians be outdone by the heathen infidelity. Be ambitious to tell the world, by your lives, a greater than Marcus Curio, than Socrates, than Thrasea, than Anaxarchus is here. God, abridging good men of this world's goods, argues not He envies their happiness, but that it consists not in them.

Whosoever understands the nature of true good, must bid adieu to the hopes of it in anything but in God alone; and for those things in which most men state felicity to consist, a good man would judge himself unhappy if he could not despise them. He that cannot want these things without thinking himself miserable, at once reproaches his Maker, as if He had created him for nothing more worthy, and degrades himself by intimating that such gratifications are most suitable to him. Is that worthy our esteem, that attends us for a little while, and leaves us for ever? Can that be our happiness, which, when we cease to be mortal, ceases to be ours? Faith makes us judge of things as they are, not as they appear; this unbinds the charm, discovers the illusion of whatsoever is admirable in the eye of sense; this unravels the doubts of the entangled mind, corrects the mistakes of the erring eye, levels the greatest difficulties, clears all the objections against Providence, and makes an afflicted state not only tolerable, but so

far amiable as it promotes our supreme happiness. Contentment teaches how to amend our lives, instead of being weary of them. It makes the worst condition here easy and comfortable, by making the mind quiet, patient, and thankful. Our prudent prevention of external evils, patience under them, with our cheerful, faithful, diligent conversation, are a part of that duty we owe to God; and are indeed the exercise of our patience, and the evidences of a contented mind. For he that grows weary of the world throws off all, and, with Jonah, wishes to die; it is a sign he wants true contentment, because that consists in a cheerful and ready compliance with the will of God, and not in a froward preference of our own will or choice: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil," John xvii. 15. By running away from our task before the end of the day, we not only lose our promised reward for bearing the burden and heat of the day, but

are justly obnoxious to be cast into prison for our rebellion and disobedience.

He that sets his love upon that which the more he loves the more he enjoys, is sure to be free from discontent; because he cannot want, he is sure to enjoy that which he loves; and, though he be deprived of other things, he is not obnoxious to impatience, because he is sure to retain that which he most values and affects, which will answer and supply lesser wants with a great advantage. I have somewhat of the best things, I will thankfully enjoy them; and, having food and raiment, take the rest as an overplus, or want them with content. I never willed not to be poor, not to be destitute of relations, not to suffer sickness or reproaches; other things are the matter of my choice, which no man, no accident, can forbid or deprive me of. What should I fear, or be vexed at, who may always be what I should; who need not be miserable, unless I will? What cause have I to be displeased, who may always please God, and myself too? Men may make me

suffer, but not do evil; kill me, but not hurt me. I may be poor, yet just and content; ill spoken of, but still I can do well. Preservation from sin is a greater mercy than exemption from suffering. He that lies under the most acute torment, may see another more sadly cruciated, if not in his body, by the agonies of his mind; and there is no pain so small, but God hath a hand in it, though it be but the aching of the little finger. Oh pain! in vain thou attemptest me, so long as I can honestly bear thee, and have so much cause of joy, for my healthful frame of soul; that He hath cured me of my lust and avarice, pride and passion, envy and revenge; which disorder most men's minds, and are more formidable pernicious evils than those that distemper their bodies, and thrust them into hospitals. How should that make me worse which makes not myself worse? It is not in my power to change my condition, but it is in my power to attain to such a greatness of mind as becomes a man; whereby I may be lifted up above the

hurt of outward crosses. It may be in the power of others to disturb my outward condition; but it is in my own power that they shall not disturb my mind. False accusations can no more destroy my integrity, than a prison exclude my comfort. It is not in my power to be handsome or witty, always in health, or rich; but it is to be good or virtuous; to have a healthful beautiful soul; to be rich in good works; to turn sickness and poverty into health and riches; to make a bad case good; and to gain advantage by losses.

Danger is better than safety; a storm than a perpetual calm; if before our fears we were the world's, but after them God's. Who is a loser, that parts with a bosom companion, and dwells ever after in the arms of God, and is inflamed with a greater love of heavenly things; that loses a friend and gets God for his Father, a relation that is far more intimate, endearing, and lasting; that, if He by His subordinate instruments remove my estate, secures me of riches in heaven, out of danger

above all accidents and disasters? All bodily pains and diseases are tolerable and easy to the pardoned, reconciled, and reformed. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. xxxiii. 24. The most vehement blasts of this world shall never intercept the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the lifting up the light of His countenance upon me, which shall put gladness into my heart more than in the time that my corn and wine, my worldly goods, increased. If He withdraw some temporal enjoyments, He will lessen my desires, or give in the more of Himself. He can crowd a great deal of comfort into a little of the creature. Where the possessions are low, He can heighten the fruition, or Himself be instead of them. Therefore He hath taken upon Him the names of all other comforts; to intimate that He is able to stand for all they signify or are worth; our portion, inheritance, habitation, high tower, shield, shadow, refuge, buckler, horn of salvation, strength, deliverer,

friend, father, husband, etc. Whatsoever benefit or helpfulness we meet with in them is in Him to be found in a more excellent manner. We have reason to thank the world if it love us not, if it make us place our comfort and content in God and a good conscience. They are unkind, whom we have obliged; but we repent not, if we have done such ungrateful persons good, and hereafter place our hopes and expectations above. It is they that injure me, not I, that ought to be troubled, except for their sin, not my own suffering. Let us not, when there is no fault in the cause, make one in the calamity; since we ought rather to render double praise for our afflictions and for our innocency. When we are punished for our crimes, we ought to have patience; but when we suffer innocently, we may well add gladness to it. Whatsoever is not pleasant may be useful, so ought to be acceptable.

When I am unloaded of my luggage I am the lighter for my journey, that calls me

away to my true riches, where my heart is already. It is but a moveable that is removed; my inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. A little money serves the traveller that hath but a little way to go. It is no dishonour or prejudice to a pilgrim to want that which would be a weight, a burden, an impediment. To him not only a little sufficeth, but much is troublesome. He is a stranger, not only to his residence, but to himself; and is rather where he is not, than where he is. Earth is not the place where I am to expect glory or greatness; I shall have enough above, and here too, so I can keep within myself, and look upon other things with an indifferent eye. This is but my pilgrimage, my passage, not my country, or place of rest; at most, my abode for a night; where I must expect bad usage, a troublesome, uneasy, uncomfortable passage; sicknesses, losses, affronts, disgraces, tempestuous weather, rough companions, that will turn me out of my way, or jostle, bespatter, throw dirt upon me in it.

This kind of usage or condition is but according to the law, the custom of the place, the common condition of things in it. I will not be solicitous for better accommodations, where I must make so short a stay and be gone; all will be amended when I come to my journey's end, the place of my rest and happiness. Shall I leave off thoughts of going home, because I see some handsome inns by the way, or another road cross it; be startled when I meet with one dissatisfaction, where I look for many? I doubt not to receive what I can justly desire; I fear not to suffer the wrongs which I do not do; I am in no danger, by reason of Him who loves me as His friend, and hath so secured the interest of all those who have consigned themselves to His care, that they are ever happy, nothing can make them miserable. I am fully content with my particular allowance; the country whither I am going shall content me with the meanest entertainment upon my road unto it. I have no power to make it all plain; nor have

bargained with God to make it so for me. I do not think there is any difficulty in the divine methods, because I understand them not; nor appoint Him a time to bestow those courtesies, which I do not absolutely pray that I may receive. I do not desire that He should alter the course of His providence to accommodate my present condition. Neither will I think that anything falls out amiss, though He permit that which I unjustly suffer from my adversaries not to be rectified in this life; since I know it will, to my infinite advantage, be set in order in another. Since the general rendezvous of all happiness is only there to be expected where my journey ends, my mind shall be always fixed upon it; I will comfort myself all the way with the thoughts of what I shall enjoy when I come unto it.

A traveller reckons of storms and tempests, ill way, foul weather, hard entertainment, homely fare, strange usage; is content with anything, makes shift with every inconvenience, minds not others' sayings, doings,

possessions, as he passes on; some are chiding, others dancing, others ploughing, others building, etc., whilst he is not at leisure to think of anything but his dear country; sets not his heart on his inn, which he must leave next morn; seeks not for honours, or offices in it. All his care is, how he may pass safe and well and quietly; he hath enough at home. Here we have houses, as foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, to be chased and driven from them at pleasure: no continuing city, but we seek one to come. And who would not contentedly go through a prison to a palace; a barren wilderness to a land of promise: endure the cross, and despise the shame, for the joy set before us? The days of mourning will be over ere long. If our cross be heavy, we have but a little way to carry it. Nothing that hath an end can make a man truly happy or miserable. This is but a step of ill way; a pleasant one is dearly bought with the loss of home. It is a very deceitful inference in any to argue unkindness, in any

temporal want or suffering, who hath a title to an eternal inheritance and reward. Were this earth hell, and the men in it devils, all the sufferings we could undergo were not worthy to be compared with our future happiness. What cared the proto-martyr St. Stephen for gnashing teeth, sparkling eyes, killing stones? Heaven made them precious. Our thoughts, which bring us in nothing but trouble and vexation, would as soon bring us in joy and pleasure did we turn them to proper objects. A thought of the heavenly glory is as soon thought of as an earthly cross. We complain the world troubles us, then what do we there? Why get we not up, by the elevation of our souls, into that quieter region? What trouble would the thoughts of future happiness be unto us? Oh who would not expect that a journey, which hath so blessed an end, and so good accommodations by the way, should be passed with all imaginable cheerfulness and alacrity; that we should live here learners and practitioners of that state of un-

mixed interminable joy to which we aspire? The most formidable calamities of this world are below all measure of comparison to that happiness, which admits of no hyperbole, entailed on patient sufferers under them.

CHAPTER X.

The Example of Christ.

CONSIDERING our great Exemplar of suffering and patience, how can we be impatient sufferers? Who can be troubled at want that worships a God willing to live and die in sorrow; His mother not rich enough to bring a lamb for an offering; a few barley loaves and fishes provision for His train; or value esteem, when He was so undervalued, traduced, envied, reproached, betrayed by His own servant, abandoned by all His disciples, except one, who followed Him longest to renounce Him the more shamefully by a threefold abjuration; put to death by His countrymen; His tribute paid

by a fish; His triumphs solemnized by another man's ass's colt; born among beasts; lived, if not upon alms, among publicans; died among thieves; His birth without a cradle; His burial without a rag or grave of His own; and the price of His blood buys a burial-place for strangers? What lower degree of poverty than to take His beginning in a stable; to make His end on a dunghill, noisome and ignominious through the carcases and offences of the executed; where He offered a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour unto God, and purchased glory unto men?

Why wouldest Thou not, O Lord, whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof, raise to Thyself a palace compiled of those precious stones which lie hid in the close coffer of that Thy inferior treasury, and command all the potentates of the earth to attend Thy train, with the glorious retinue of blessed angels? Why did not Thy stately followers glitter in their shining liveries, and the quintessence of all this world's delicacies

appear to furnish Thy table? Since Thou wouldest come to our earth, why wouldest Thou not enjoy the best entertainment it could give Thee? But, from the super-eminent height of glory, stoop to abase Thyself to the sufferance of extremities and indignities, and sink Thyself to the lowest humility, to exalt our condition to the highest honour! How should we learn both to want and abound from Thee, when abounding with the glory and riches of heaven, Thou wouldest want a lodging in Thy first welcome to the world! How can it deject us to be rejected of the world, which is none of ours, when Thou camest to Thy own, and Thy own received Thee not? What wonder for Thy servants to walk about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, when their Lord is denied harbour and safety for His life? Why wouldest Thou be thus homely, but that by contemning worldly glory, Thou mightest teach us to do so, and sanctify poverty unto them whom Thou callest unto

want; that since Thou, who hadst the choice of all earthly conditions, wouldest be born poor, and live despised, those which must want out of necessity might not think their poverty grievous? Who can murmur and repine under the harshest usages, that considers Thou, who knew all from the beginning, choosest to suffer uncivil men to crowd Thee with the horse and the ass in a public stable; to have contempt thrown upon Thy poverty, and neglect added to all inconveniences; not only to appear mean, but even to force others to think meanly of Thee? He that made all places finds none Himself, and is content; He that hath many mansions for others in His Father's house, hath not the least privacy in an inn, and complains not, repines not at it; He that would have given His churlish host an eternal house in heaven for asking for, cannot have the least part of his here, because His parents seem poor, yet fetches not fire down to consume him for this inhumanity. None will have cause to complain of coarse

robes, hard bed, thin table and attendance, that calls to mind how it was with the great King. Those idols of the world's esteem, riches and honour, are so far from making us truly happy, that they are not of themselves eligible in the number of good things. No man is to be ashamed of or disquieted with innocent poverty, of which our Lord made election; or worthy to be His member, that suffered so much for other men's sins, who cannot endure so little affliction, if not for His sake, yet for his own. The best expedient to shame us out of repinings is often to draw this uneven parallel; confront our petty uneasiness with His unspeakable torments. It is impossible then, surely, but our admiration and gratitude must supplant our impatience. Delicate tender members are indecent, unbecoming a head stuck full of thorns. Our heaviest crosses are but as chips or shavings to His.

He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Him, is not worthy of Him, Matt. x. 38; as not having the courage, the

constancy, the sincerity of a Christian, or one pretending to so great benefits, such high privileges, such excellent rewards, as He proposes; not worthy of the honour to wait upon Him; cannot be His disciple; not capable to be reckoned among them; showing such an incapacity to learn, declaring such an indisposition to transcribe those needful lessons of humility, patience, self-resignation, submission to the Divine will, so fairly set by the instruction and example of Him, who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. ii. 21).

If my head but ache, I lay it down on a soft pillow, to ease my pain and lessen my grief; whilst Thou hadst no death-bed but a cross, or bolster but of thorns, whereon to lay Thy weak and wearied head; no clothes to cover or shelter Thee from the stormy cold, but those of innocency. When I am sick, my friends about me bestir themselves to ease my diseased body, and revive my fainting spirits with cordials and comfortable

words ; while the only succour those about Thee afforded were bitter scoffs, and wine mingled with gall, at Thy hour of death. How may my face be confounded with shame, who am so wayward and impatient to suffer a light affliction for or from Thee, who enduredst such extreme unpitied torments for me !

Can we now imagine it a very happy thing to be high and prosperous in the world ; to swim in affluence and pleasure ? Can we take it for a misery to be mean and low ; to conflict with wants and straits here, seeing the Fountain of all happiness purposely condescended to so forlorn a state, and was pleased to become so deep a sufferer ?

Beholding this tragic spectacle, with devout eyes of our minds, how can we but disregard the deceitful vanities, the mischievous delights of this world ? How can we but reconcile our minds to the worst condition, support our hearts under the heaviest pressures, submit cheerfully to, gladly accept of, the divine disposal, however

grievous and afflictive to our natural will? Can we reasonably expect, can we ardently desire, can we eagerly affect, great prosperity, when our Lord tasted such adversity? Can we admire those splendid trifles which He never regarded in His life, and which at His death only served to mock and abuse Him? Can we relish those sordid pleasures, of which He willingly vouchsafed not to taste, and the contraries whereof He, dying, chose to bear in the extremity? Can we disdain or despise a state of sorrow and disgrace, which He, by a voluntary undertaking, hath so dignified and graced, by which we so nearly resemble, and become so conformable to Him, concur and partake with Him, yea, by which, in some cases, we may promote, and after a sort, complete His designs, filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh? (Col. i. 24.) Who can now hugely prefer being esteemed, approved, favoured, commended by men, rather than their infamy, reproach, derision, persecution? Who can be ambitious of worldly honour or

repute, covetous of wealth, or greedy of pleasure, that observes Him choosing rather to hang upon a cross than sit upon a throne; inviting the clamours of scorn and spite rather than acclamations of blessing and praise; divesting Himself of all secular power, pomp, plenty, conveniency, and solace; embracing the garb of a slave, the repute of a malefactor, before the dignity and respect of a prince, which were His due, which He most easily could have obtained?

Here Thou healedst all that came unto Thee; far be it from me to think Thy glory hath abated of Thy power, of Thy mercy, of Thy compassion; that the Head is less pitiful on the throne than on the footstool. In all our afflictions Thou art afflicted. Still and ever Thou art our assured, faithful, all-sufficient physician, and healest all that come unto Thee in their maladies. It is as impossible we should want help, as Thou power and mercy. No disease shall ever thrust any of Thy patients into the grave, till Thou turn the key and open it. Give

me but as much comfort in this my sorrow, as Thou givest me security, and at the worst I shall do well.

Now is the time of my great providence and patience, fortitude and courage: to bring forth that store I have been so long gathering; to practise that Christianity I have so pleasantly, so peaceably professed. Oh, let my temper and moderation appear in this difficulty! Let the world see the fruit of my religion; that there is more in it than a bare name; that I can wisely digest my own desires; as well advise myself as others. It is a scandal to religion to afflict ourselves with great and heavy sadness; whilst patient sufferings are highly instructive to our brethren. Where is the consolation of Holy Scripture? Where is the fruit of preaching? Where is the sweetness of prayer? Where is the counsel of wise men? Where is the result of experience? Where is the exercise of faith, and love, and patience? Where are my good thoughts, purposes, and resolutions, so well taken in the time of my

prosperity, to be an example of courage to the rest of mankind? Where is that cloud of witnesses, of so many patient ones, whose constancy I have so oft admired; especially my Lord and Saviour, the most glorious character of patience and submission, freedom and courtesy, candour and ingenuity, lowliness and humility, gentleness and meekness, charity and compassion, kindness and affability, mildness and forgiveness, trust and confidence; an abyss of love, of mercy, of dolour, of ignominy, of blood, of loathing, of excess, of admiration, of amazement! which swelleth all thoughts, drieth up all tears, stoppeth all mouths, easeth all pains, drencheth all conceptions, dims the lustre of all earthly grandeur and beauty, damps the scenes of all carnal delights and satisfaction, quashes all that extravagant glee which we can find in any wild frolic or riotous merriment, staineth all our pride, checks all wantonnesses, disposes our minds to prefer submission to God's will before compliance with the fancies and desires of men? Who

can now complain he doth or suffereth too much, or is treated with less tenderness than he deserves? All I endure is nothing to what I should, and Thou didst endure for me, O blessed Jesus. The contemplation and application of Thy sufferings is enough to sweeten a whole life of bitterness. I care not how unpleasant a portion I find here, so the power and virtue of Thy precious death may season it to my soul.

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion of the Foregoing Considerations.

AND now methinks amidst these thoughts it is no uneasy thing in all estates to be content; and not so much to suffer as to receive all that happens, as if I would not have it fall out otherwise. Methinks, I could now extract gain out of losses, and stand upon the ruins of them, saying, I have lost nothing: make damage itself give interest for whatever it takes from me; the crossest

accidents turn to advantage, comply with, and serve my main concern; and my very enemies tributary to my welfare.

Oh, how unconcerned might I pass through the allurements and affrightments of this flattering, molesting, tumultuous busy world, but for my base, distrustful, evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. iii. 12), who, by His own communication, can make a rich amends for the loss of any temporal concernments, and deliver me from the want of them, even while they are wanting; that will not fail to give patience if not peace, contentment if not riches, submission to His will if not the fulfilling of my own. And it is almost all one, never to be in want, or never to be without contentment.

Was my treasure in heaven, and my heart fixed there, upon the centre of my bliss and happiness, how unmoved would the rumours of wars and devastations find and leave me, which invade and agitate men's breasts, and so disturb their most pleasant composed hours. I should let Him alone to rule the

world that made it: to take care of me and mine, who hath engaged it; who cannot but do it; whose care and providence watches over me; whose eye and ear and arms are open to me; whose bowels yearn for me; whose blood purchased me; whose eternal blessedness awaits me.

Had I conquered my inclinations to things below, and raised my mind above their crosses and contents: did I always retain a profound indifferency for all those various fancies which trouble and disquiet the doting worldling and its fond admirers; how confidently, undauntedly, might I march among them, dreadless, unshaken and unconfused; despising all that which is the strife and vexation, toil and ruin, of mankind.

Were I but once arrived at a true indifferency of mind, acquiescence in, resignation, ready compliance to, infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, and feared doing instead of suffering evil; how serene, how full of tranquillity should I be amidst the changes, commotions, tumults, and convulsions of this

stormy region, this uncertain state, though my lot fell in that age that stands next the world's last breaking up, when the whole frame of nature shall be in an agony and burning fit!

Did my faith give me a constant lively view of those rewards of virtue God hath promised, and His followers are now blessed in; how secure should I sit from the blasts of fortune, in that place of uninterrupted perfect joy, and look down with compassion, scorn, and indignation upon this little mole-hill of busy ants, as fools and madmen, though all the world conspired to make me miserable!

Oh, could I but be taken up more with the love of God; had I an absolute empire over my passions; did I rightly embrace the reconciliation wrought with Him through Jesus Christ, and maintained that faith by good works, without which food it falls into a shaking palsy, and pines away; were I always careful of pleasing Him and my own conscience; might I but see and feel the

loveliness of my dear Redeemer, till my heart was filled and ravished with that love; had I but more of the spirit of adoption, and those filial affections to my heavenly Father; could I but breathe and pant more earnestly after Him, and maintain a constant correspondence and communion with Him: how little should I value, how easily should I spare those trifles the purblind world admire; how careless should I be who had the pleasures, honours, riches of it; how far should I be from envying them! I would pity the miserable tyrants of this world, as slaves, and worse than beggars, that taste not of that kingdom of love and pleasure which dwells in a true believer's breast. I would bear the loss of other things with the same frame of spirit I enjoyed them; refuse to part with no enjoyment to secure this, and follow all the pomp and pleasure of the world to the grave, without a sad heart or a sorrowful countenance. I would sit down contentedly in a sense of my Father's love, though I had nothing else; yea, reckon I had all if I

wanted not this. Rest satisfied if I have but a Father in heaven, though I have never a friend upon earth; "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Death itself should not dismay me; but be welcomed with joy and gladness, as an auxiliary sent from God, to give me the day and triumph over all my conflicts; to free me from the troubles and uneasiness of a wretched life; that takes off all our burdens, strikes the sweat off of our brow, calls us for ever off our warfare, sounds the joyful retreat from all our conflicts, frees the captive without ransom, dismisses the oppressed without the consent of the oppressor, brings home the banished in spite of the banisher, heals the sick without pain of physic, mends all marred fortunes, repairs all damages and disasters, makes even all disorders and inequalities, and necessitates us to be no more miserable.

The dust of the grave will dry up our tears, bury all our cares in silence and oblivion; we shall have a sure repose in that bed of rest, and never be put to the hazard of a battle

more. His everlasting arms stand open to receive and crown us, as soon as the fight is over, in that quiet region, where all evil is separated from us, no enemy to appear against us, no discomposure, interruption, or end of perfect joy, tranquillity, and happiness; where patient, cheerful enduring hardship in our warfare is recorded, reckoned among our faithful services; light afflictions for a moment rewarded with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: where we shall put off our helmet, and put on our crown; exchange the whole armour of God for robes and diadems, sceptres and palms, ensigns of kings and conquerors; where are mansions made ready for us that call Escurials, Louvres the stateliest, proudest structures, but better modelled dung-hills, lessening into inconsiderableness, undiscernibleness: a solid, secure resting-place, after our weary pilgrimage, in our Father's house and love; liable to no injury, repair, or decay, hazard or calamity, fire or storm, thief or moth, disturbance, disinheritance, or ejectment; where

He will familiarly converse with and entertain all His domestics, His followers, who shall be not as unconcerned spectators, but interested possessors, glorified together with Him: where the tree of knowledge shall be without enclosure, and the most voluptuous epicurism, in reference to it, be innocent; where there shall be neither lust nor forbidden fruit; where the pleasure of speculation shall be without the toil, and that maxim be eternally antiquated, he that increases knowledge increaseth sorrow: where we shall discern the apt conjunctures and admirable dependencies of things, which, when acted upon the stage of this world, seemed so cross, so perplexed, so full of mysterious intricacy; where we shall for ever contemplate the extent of that all-creating, all-ruling Power, the principle of all action, life, and motion, through the whole creation, that turns the mighty wheel of Providence throughout the succession of all time: where goodness, grace, and mercy shall be fully opened, and the difficulty vanish of reconciling fatherly severity

with love; where, after all discomposures here, our spirits shall return to a consistency, and the same invariable appearances of glory be always present, without being sullied, obscured, or ever fading away; where the law of sin shall never check the law of God; but all rebellious reluctances, contentions, contradictions, cease for ever. No more reproaches, oppressions, or persecutions; no more false accusations, hailings into prisons, draggings before tribunals; no more wandering into deserts, in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, in dens and caves of the earth. All infirmities, sinful inclinations, and indispositions, unmortified corruptions, tumultuous passions, storms and tempests, fears and cares, pains and diseases, distempers and uneasinesses, are wholly cured and removed, have now found a period, are for ever vanished and done away.

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